

GAMERS REPUBLIC magazine

E3 SHOW STOPPER

FINAL FANTASY X

ALSO INSIDE

MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC
FLOIGAN BROTHERS
LUIGI'S MANSION
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MAXIMO
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ISSUE 36

AUG 2001

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From the creators of Bloody Roar® 1 and 2 comes Bloody Roar® 3—the newest in the critically acclaimed fighting series. Unleash the beast within, transforming into your animal life-form mid-fight for the ultimate showdown. Fighting has never looked this good—or been this brutal.



Battle it out as 14 fighters—each with an alternate beast life-form and special combo moves.



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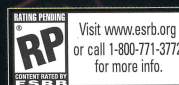


Tackle 12 gameplay modes in 9 immersive 3-D environments, featuring destructible walls and floors.

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PlayStation®2



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BLOODY ROAR 3

PlayStation®2

manifesto

rise from your grave!

Can this be? Is GR finally all the way back? Following the world's longest hiatus, we are now a fully functional publishing concern. So, welcome back! Can you believe what we've done with the place? Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to peruse these pages and then tell us if we've hit pay dirt, or just dirt. One thing you can't argue is our timing. The industry is on a major roll. Tomb Raider hit big at the cinema, Nintendo and Microsoft officially joined the latest generation console wars, and the Game Boy Advance is selling

through at a record pace. Although neither Sony or Nintendo seem poised to take down Sony just yet, both are gearing up for the long haul. Personally, I see too many ports on both systems at this point, while over in the Sony camp new brands are flourishing. Maximo, Jak and Daxter, Devil May Cry, ICO, and Final Fantasy X are all A titles,

"...Maximo, Jak and Daxter, Devil May Cry, ICO, and Final Fantasy X are all A titles, and they're all PS2."

and they're all PS2. Then again, with the Advance, I suppose Nintendo is once again poised to be the big money winner overall. With the Online and Gates factors yet to chime in, it's really anyone's race as 2002 draws near...



Dave Halverson, EIC



36

august 2001

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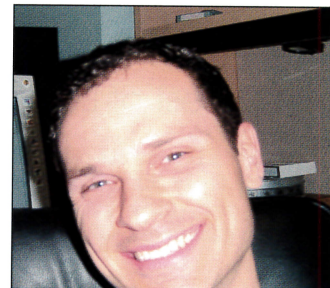
dave halverson

Between the new GR and launching his Anime book, Dave's nearly lost his mind and all motor skills, although we can still hear MX 2002 and Twisted Metal Black music seeping out of his darkened office so we believe he's still alive. But what are those *other* noises!?



brady fiechter

Lacking even a scrap of patience, he's a bit cranky waiting for the launch of GameCube and the fall floodgates to open on the PlayStation 2. E3 hinted at what could be the richest year of gaming in a long time.



mike hobbs

About the only thing Mr. Hobbs can think about at this time is the imminent release of Final Fantasy X in Japan. His colleagues are imploring him to wait for the English version, but he has no patience.



chris hoffman

Chris' 16-bit heart is definitely on fire this month. After playing hours of Chrono Trigger, Final Fantasy IV, Castlevania Chronicle, Final Fight and Street Fighter II, Chris is partying like it's 1989. And, yes, he is related to a BMX rider.



steve thomason

Despite catching a bad cold the day before the show, Steve enjoyed this year's E3 immensely. Aside from the plethora of great games on display, he also caught a glimpse of his Olympic hero Kurt Angle. It's true, it's true.



mike wakamatsu

Remember Animal House? Well, is this not a star in the making? You're looking at the man who laid out THE WHOLE BOOK! And eating BK no less. He's either sub or super human. You make the call!



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the best of E3 2001

This year's E3 was one of the most pivotal ever. Nintendo finally got cubed, the Xbox painted the place green, Sony unloaded both barrels and portable gaming received a major shot in the arm...



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ico

An unforgettable excursion from the makers of Ape Escape, Ico is a stunning, dramatic take on adventure gaming.

52

gran turismo 3: a-spec

The most anticipated racing game of all time gets reviewed inside. Read the only verdict that matters.



PlayStation®2

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SYSCOM
ENTERTAINMENT





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sonic adventure 2

Sega's blazing blue mascot makes his last curtain call as Sega's own before heading to the offworld colonies of Nintendo and beyond.

qr



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game boy advance reviews

And on the Seventh day Nintendo created the Game Boy Advance and people began genetic experimentation to grow more hands...

56

twisted metal: black

Kill, maim, torture, and drive, baby, drive. Enter a world gone mad where breaking the rules is the only way to survival



the
legend
lives

on

Castlevania®

Circle of the Moon™

all new for the game boy® advance



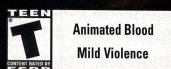
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[frontlines]

gamecube and xbox prepare for launch

On November 5, a new era of Nintendo will be upon us. On that date, thousands of Nintendo fans will rush to electronics and toy stores all over North America to be among the first to purchase the Nintendo GameCube, the latest and most powerful system from the video game giant. And much like the N64 before it, GameCube will arrive at a lower price point than the competition - \$199. At Nintendo's pre-E3 press conference, Nintendo of America executive vice-president of sales and marketing Peter Main not only officially announced the GameCube release date and price, but also emphasized that GameCube exists for only one purpose: to be the "very best of the next generation of video game consoles." What that means, however, is that right now GameCube will be strictly a home gaming machine - it can't play DVDs (though Panasonic is releasing a GameCube/DVD player combo in Japan and possibly the U.S.) and despite the modem and broadband adaptor shown at Space World last August, there are no current online plans for the system. What there should be, though, are lots of great games. Five first-party games are scheduled to hit at launch - Luigi's Mansion, Super Smash Bros. Melee, Starfox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet, Wave Race: Blue Storm and NBA Courtside 2002. Third-party games scheduled at or near launch include LucasArts' Star Wars: Rogue Leader, Sega's Monkeyball, Midway's Ready 2 Rumble, Acclaim's Extreme G 3, Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2, All-Star Baseball 2002 and NFL Quarterback Club 2002, and Electronic Arts' Madden NFL 2002. Surprisingly, no Mario game will be available at launch, but Shigeru Miyamoto, who was at the conference demonstrating his new strategy game Pikmin, said a GameCube Mario game would be seen at "the next show." Japan, meanwhile, will get the GameCube on Sept. 14, while it won't hit Europe until 2002.



After months of rumors and speculation, Microsoft finally revealed their official Xbox launch plans to bleary-eyed, sleepy video-game journalists and the national press alike at a press conference in the morning just prior to E3 2001. Apparently patterning their launch strategy after Sony's PS2 success, the Xbox will be hitting at the magic \$299 price point, and will arrive on November 8 in North America. Between 600,000 and 800,000 systems will be available on launch day, and between 1 to 1.5 million systems out by the end of the year. Not surprisingly, the Xbox will come equipped with a hard drive and an Ethernet port (although players will still need to subscribe to a broadband service). Games will first make use of Xbox's broadband capabilities in 2002. However, the Xbox will not be able to play DVDs right out of the box; instead, a remote control that activates the DVD features will be sold separately for \$29.99. During Microsoft's press conference, the company reaffirmed that their third-party developers would be producing about 70 percent of the Xbox software, and that the first wave of titles will include Tecmo's Dead or Alive 3, Konami's Airforce Delta Storm, Eidos' Mad Dash Racing, Acclaim's All-Star Baseball 2003 and Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2,



and THQ's WWF Raw is War, in addition to a first-party lineup that includes Halo, Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee, Project Gotham Racing and NFL Fever. The conference also provided for the announcement of Capcom's first Xbox offerings: Dino Crisis 3, a port of Onimusha, and Brain-Box, an all-new robot simulator produced by Shinji Mikami. In all, more than 80 games are currently in development, and some 15 to 20 games are expected at Xbox launch.

ps2 journeys online



Now that the PlayStation 2 is finally taking flight, Sony is adding extra fuel to the engines with a bold online strategy, which was revealed at the company's press conference the Wednesday before the start of E3. A visibly confident SCEA president and COO Kaz Hirai stood onstage, holding a prototype of the PS2 network adapter, boasting of the PS2 broadband juggernaut coming in November. Assisting in the charge will be AOL, RealNetworks, Macromedia, and Sisco Systems -- all giant power players certain to get the network start-

ed right. Anyone who's experienced Dreamcast online gaming knows the exciting potential of network play, but never content at just good enough, Sony is attempting to turn the PS2 into a veritable PC, complete with 40 gig hard drive -- it fits in that big gap in the back of the unit -- monitor, keyboard and mouse. No word yet on the price of all this transformation, so just start saving what little you have leftover after breaking the bank for the load of awesome games on the way.

tekken 4 - first screens and info



The evolution of the most popular 3D fighting series is almost here - Namco's Tekken 4. As you can see from these screens, the game looks absolutely gorgeous, although it isn't much of a jump over the breathtaking Tekken Tag on PS2. At least 20 characters will be playable, including newcomers Craig Marduk (a

wrestler) and Christie Monteiro (a female equivalent of Eddy) and returning fighters like Ling Xiaoyu and Jin Kazama. Most important, Namco has eliminated the endless, wall-less arenas and replaced them with enclosed, interactive battlegrounds. We can't wait for more.

molesting animals revive megadrive?

"Entering the game, a lovely SONIC appears walking along the river bank. During its walk it will be attacked by some walking- by animals, sharp mouthed stuff and flying animals, or some ammos and even some little fish jumping from the chain bridge. And if Sonic can pick up some magic circles during its trip his hp index will be enhanced." Did you catch that? That's the instruction description for Sonic 1, one of the 20 games packaged with the new Mega Drive 3. Forget GameCube, Xbox and PS2 - this is the next thing in video game consoles. The Mega Drive 3 is a Sega-licensed system (made in China) that is basically a controller that plugs straight into the TV - there's no console or carts necessary. The games are built right in to the hardware, featuring Sega 16-bit classics like Fatal Labyrinth, Alex Kidd, Sonic, Sonic 2, Sonic 3, Sonic 5 and Sonic 6...sort of. According to the manufacturer, Sonic 5 is "Same as game 1 (SONIC THE HEDGEHOG), starting from level 5. The background is a giant machine. During



the walking, Sonic not only needs to escape the molestation of the animal but also be careful of the machine's unexpected ammos, such as laser beams and fires." By the same token, "Torpeoo Range" and "Titus the Fox" are really levels from Alex Kidd. Now this puppy is what I call a collector's item.

other stuff

- Game Arts and Enix have announced that they will co-develop a new Grandia game for PlayStation 2 entitled Grandia X. This will be a completely new adventure not to be confused with the PS2 port of Grandia 2.

- Two hit Konami franchises are coming to GBA: Zone of the Enders 2173 Testament and a Genso Suikoden card battle game.

- Legend of Legaia II is under development at Sony for PS2. A fall release date has been announced for Japan, but a US release has yet to be confirmed.

- Crazy Taxi The Movie? Supposedly it's coming, directed by Richard Donner.

- Capcom is teaming up with Namco to deliver Resident Evil Gun Survivor 2 to arcades, which is based on the Code Veronica environs and characters. It has to be better than the first.

- The SNES classic shooter Phalanx is coming to Game Boy Advance. But will it feature that geezer with the banjo?

- Sony will be partnering with Sega in Europe, where Sega's PS2 games such as Virtua Fighter 4 and Ferrari F355 will be published by its former rival.

- At least one more must-have Neo Geo Pocket game is on the way from SNK: SNK vs. Capcom: Cardfighters Clash 2.

- Just before deadline, Agatec revealed that Last Blade 2 is coming to Dreamcast in the U.S. Look for a review next issue.

parappa 2? you gotta believe!



Sony finally revealed the first details and footage of the long-awaited PaRappa the Rapper 2 at the World Hobby Fair in Tokyo. Set for release on August 30, PaRappa 2 features gameplay and graphics similar to the first game, with the unique paper-flat graphic style looking sharper

and better shaded than before. Some characters from the original will return (including Chop Chop Master Onion and PJ Bear) and a much-requested 2-player mode will be added.

> database 8.2001

based on sales data for may 2001

top 10 playstation 2



1. Red Faction
2. Crazy Taxi
3. Dark Cloud
4. ATV Offroad Fury
5. Madden NFL 2001
6. Gauntlet: Dark Legacy
7. Onimusha: Warlords
8. Tekken Tag Tournament
9. Triple Play Baseball
10. Midnight Club

top 10 playstation



1. Spec Ops Ranger Elite
2. Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX
3. Gran Turismo 2
4. ATV Quad Power Racing
5. Digimon World 2
6. Tomb Raider: Last Rev.
7. Spec Ops
8. Tekken 3
9. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
10. MLB 2002

top 10 dreamcast



1. World Series Baseball
2. NBA 2K1
3. Crazy Taxi
4. Crazy Taxi 2
5. 18 Wheeler Pro Trucker
6. Virtua Tennis
7. Sonic Adventure
8. Jet Grind Radio
9. Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX
10. Project Justice

top 10 nintendo 64



1. Mario Party 3
2. Pokemon Stadium 2
3. Super Smash Bros.
4. Dr. Mario 64
5. Paper Mario
6. Zelda: Majora's Mask
7. The World Is Not Enough
8. Pokemon Stadium
9. Super Mario 64
10. Mario Kart 64

top 10 handhelds



1. Zelda: Oracle of Seasons
2. Zelda: Oracle of Ages
3. Pokemon Silver
4. Pokemon Gold
5. Super Mario Deluxe
6. Kirby's Tilt 'n' Tumble
7. Pokemon Yellow
8. Mario Tennis
9. Shrek
10. Rocket Power

top 10 overall



1. Zelda: Seasons (GBC)
2. Zelda: Ages (GBC)
3. Mario Party 3 (N64)
4. Red Faction (PS2)
5. Pokemon Silver (GB)
6. Pokemon Stad. 2 (N64)
7. Pokemon Gold (GB)
8. Crazy Taxi (PS2)
9. Dark Cloud (PS2)
10. ATV Offroad Fury (PS2)

Before camouflage,
warriors didn't hide.



RUIN

VIKING WARLORD

One unstoppable viking on the road to Valhalla.



PlayStation®2



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> database gr top 10

based on games played through 07.02

dave halverson



1. MX 2002
2. Crash: Wrath of Cortex
3. Twisted Metal Black
4. ICO
5. Castlevania: COTM
6. Sin and Punishment
7. Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec
8. Klonoa Empire of Dreams
9. Furfighters VR
10. Floigan Bros.

brady fiechter



1. Final Fantasy Chronicles
2. Twisted Metal Black
3. NBA Street
4. Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec
5. Klonoa 2
6. Sonic Adventure 2
7. Mario Kart Super Circuit
8. Dark Cloud
9. Castlevania: COTM
10. Sonic Adventure 2

michael hobbs



1. Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec
2. Mario Kart Super Circuit
3. Stretch Panic
4. Klonoa 2
5. Final Fantasy IX
6. Sonic Adventure 2
7. Sin and Punishment
8. Final Fight One
9. Time Crisis 2
10. Test Drive Le Mans

mike wakamatsu



1. Anarchy Online
2. Metal Gear Solid 2 (Demo)
3. Castlevania: COTM
4. Diablo II: LoD
5. RPG Tsukuru 2001
6. Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2 (GBA)
7. Baldurs Gate II: ToB
8. Lufia II
9. Lufia
10. Chrono Trigger

chris hoffman



1. Final Fantasy Chronicles
2. Final Fight One
3. Castlevania: COTM
4. Zelda: Oracle of Seasons
5. Street Fighter II Turbo Revival
6. Zelda: Oracle of Ages
7. Klonoa - Empire of Dreams
8. Sonic Adventure 2
9. Metal Gear Solid 2 (Demo)
10. Konami Krazy Racers

steve thomason



1. Metal Gear Solid 2 (Demo)
2. Mario Kart Super Circuit
3. Klonoa 2
4. Sonic Adventure 2
5. NBA Street
6. Onimusha: Warlords
7. Worms World Party
8. Crazy Taxi 2
9. Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec
10. Shadow of Destiny



*The story of a hero.
His adventure. And his ears.*

A villainous force has transformed the dream world of Lunatea into a nightmare. A young hero, Klonoa, has been given the task of rescuing this once enchanted land. A daunting mission, to be sure. But with ears to ride the wind, and a magic ring to control his foes, this hero's victory cry will surely be heard.

KLONOA 2
Lunatea's Veil

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PlayStation 2



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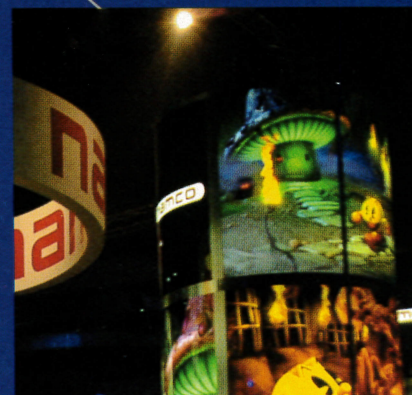
the best of e3 2001



Screams one drunken editor over the Everclear-induced noise at the always hyped, always extravagant Sony E3 party, "Sony f***n rocked the show, man!"

"You suck. Nintendo totally won," retorts a GameCube deciple visibly torked, preparing for a knock-down verbal thrashing. "How can anyone not give the E3 crown to Nintendo? Even a moron could see who had the greatest games!"

What, no support for Xbox?



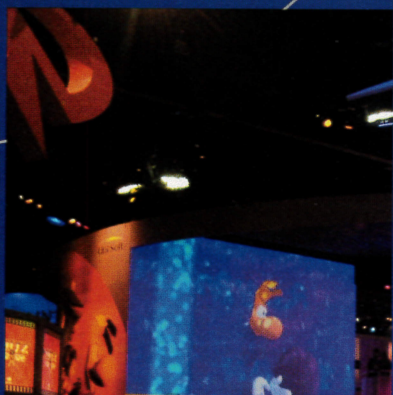
Everyone had their favorites at the oppressively bustling Electronic Entertainment Expo 2001, the biggest and baddest and most electric mass video game gathering yet. If you loved games, you were overloaded by the pervasive energy that pumped through the show floor, generated by one impressive game after another. Microsoft has officially entered the playing field, Sega has broken off to play ball with multiple teams, Nintendo is as unique and steadfast as ever, and Sony is deep in preparation for round one of the holiday battle for your dollar. It's gonna get interesting. It's gonna be big. And

whatever happens, you're guaranteed an overflow of awesome games no matter which controller you happen to have your eager hands wrapped around.

Each company's plans for supremacy were disseminated at press conferences the Wednesday before the show. Sony promised World Domination by revealing an aggressive Internet strategy -- partnership with AOL and Netscape is an auspicious start -- and plans to turn the PS2 into a veritable PC with plug-and-play broadband support and a 40-gig hard drive. Nintendo guaranteed that they will be

e 20

3 01



The Best because they still care only for game making, promoting the latest Nintendo strategy, aka The Nintendo Difference: innovation, heritage, quality, and characters. When the great Miyamoto gets on stage to preach the company mantra, you find little reason to doubt. Leave the doubting to Microsoft, who also pleaded its case for Company No. 1 by touting a robust lineup of Sega titles, strong PC migration, and announcing Dino Crisis 3 exclusively for Xbox. Add to this enough marketing money to purchase your soul and you get, at the very least, an ambitious contender. Xbox November 8;

GameCube November 5. Are you not entertained?

After all the frantic partying, ceaseless conjecture, aggressive speculation, overblown spectacle and information overload, a rather impressive fact remained: there are more great games from more talented developer from more well-funded companies than ever before. But there were those games that did more than impress, showing us something completely new, something boldly inventive -- games that reaffirm your love for gaming. Read on and discover those games that will rock your world in the coming months:



Ask anyone at E3 what their game of the show was, and more often than not they'd flash a knowing, almost giddy smile before replying, "Final Fantasy X." The game is so undeniably beautiful that the mere sight of it evoked feelings of intense excitement and almost unbearable anticipation. Its real-time settings are, remarkably, far more detailed and complex than even FFI's pre-rendered backdrops, and the DVD-driven FMV appears ready to stir our emotions like never before. Some other PS2 titles on this list are grand technical achievements to be sure, but the visual splendor of Square's upcoming epic borders on high art.

FFVII and VIII character designer Tetsuya Nomura has returned for part X, yet the game is much more vibrant and colorful than either of those installments. But

it isn't particularly reminiscent of FFI, either. Instead it lies somewhere in between, an intriguing mixture of sci-fi and fantasy with a mystical flare. The resultant look is new and refreshing, and serves to once again broaden the series' horizons.

Some unfamiliarity is also present in the game's battle system. Gone is the Active Time bar, replaced by a Grandia-esque meter that indicates the upcoming turn order. This new chart allows the player greater precision when formulating an attack strategy. Furthermore, armor, weapons, and even characters can be switched in and out mid-battle, adding even more strategic depth to the proceedings. The final big change is that summoned monsters no longer just attack





once and then disappear. They instead become controllable for the duration of the battle, and can attack, perform special moves, and cast magic. These welcome innovations are likely the handiwork of Front Mission battle designer Toshiro Tsuchida (who was announced to have been involved with the project) and should make those random encounters much more enjoyable.

As for the inclusion of voiceovers, everything in the E3 demo was still in Japanese, but Square promises to put a substantial amount of time and effort into the English dub. For those FF traditionalists who nevertheless balk at the idea of spoken dialogue in their favorite series, the company will also provide an option to turn the voices off completely. An option for the Japanese voices (a la Onimusha)

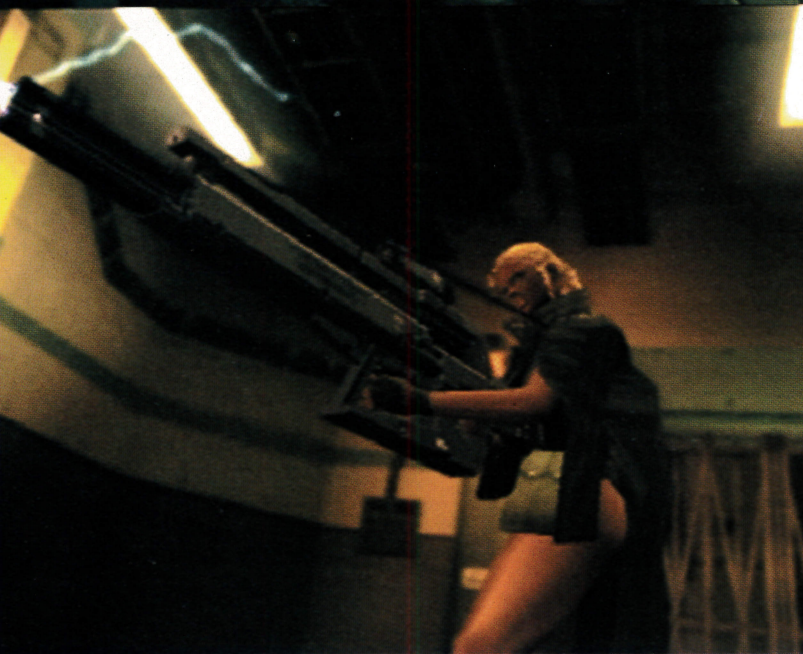
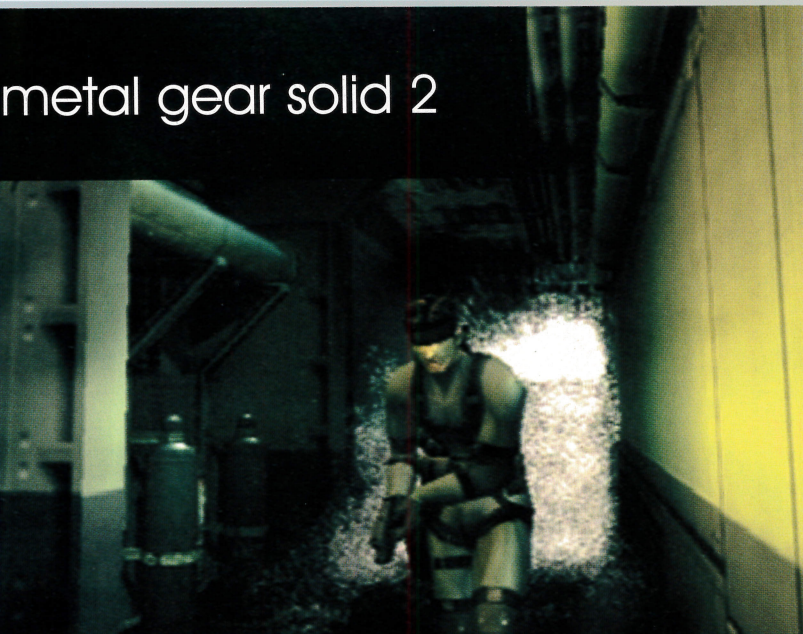
will probably not be included in the American release however, because the game already fills up the entire DVD as is.

Unfortunately, although it's still on track for a July 19, 2001 release in Japan, Final Fantasy X has been delayed in the U.S. until early 2002. The reasons for the delay are likely the amount of time it will take to do a quality dub and the fact that Square wants to perfectly re-synch the characters' lip movements to their new English voices. Regardless, if what we saw at E3 was any indication, the Final Fantasy series is poised to once again exceed our expectations and elevate the RPG genre to previously unimaginable heights. - steve thomason

publisher **square ea** • developer **square** • available **q1 2002**
system **playstation 2**



metal gear solid 2



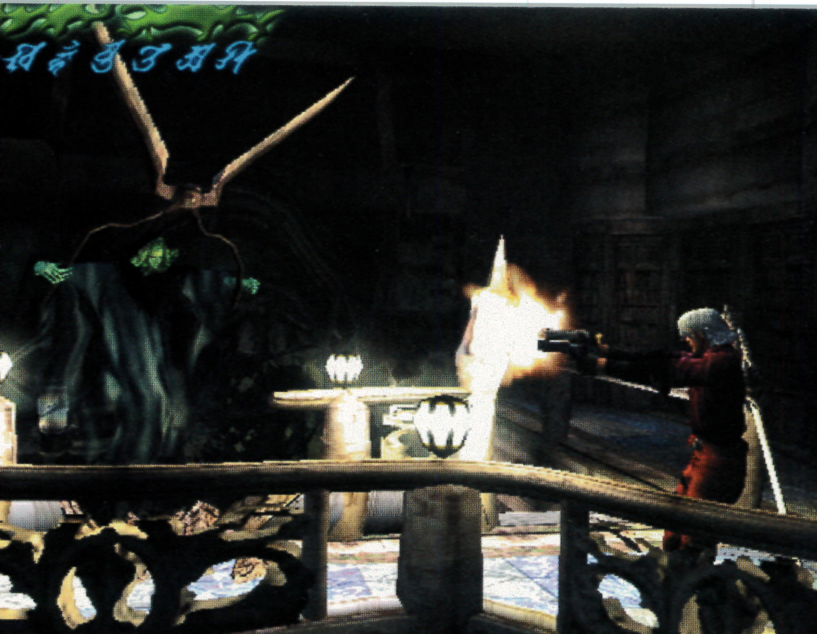
To be honest, we were expecting to walk right past Metal Gear Solid 2 at this year's E3. After all, we played the living daylights out of the trial version and foolishly thought we'd have little reason to stop at Konami's booth to see this. Bad form. The trailer prepared for E3 impressed us to the core, reigniting our enthusiasm for what is looking more and more like the ultimate game. MGS2 gets better every time it's shown.

So what was it this time which impressed us so deeply? Well, apart from some tantalizing peeks into the game's storyline, including glimpses of the Ninja and a

potentially drowning Solid Snake, the trailer exhibited an attention to detail and real-time motion that we have simply never seen before, even in prior demonstrations of the game. Unlike something like Devil May Cry, where its texture work is the star of the show, Metal Gear achieves its effect through lighting, atmospheric effects, and a precision in modeling the rugged, matte finish of industrial and military reality. And of course, Hideo Kojima's direction during the movie scenes was perfect and full of drama, pointing to the brilliance that will no doubt be on display in the final version. - mike hobbs

publisher **konami** • developer **kcej** • available **november**
system **playstation 2**





devil may cry



Prediction: Devil May Cry will (a) be one of the best critically received games of the year; (b) sell well over a million copies its first few months in release; (c) make Resident Evil fans forget that part four is a long ways away; (d) invoke the question to designers everywhere, "What do they have that we don't?"; (e) make you shiver with glee that the PlayStation 2 isn't a dud after all (shame on you all for doubting).

Word is, Devil May Cry was originally envisioned as Resident Evil 4, moving several months through the development cycle before Capcom decided that the game was unique enough to expand into an original series. Directed by the mind behind Resident Evil, Shinji Mikami, Devil May Cry is dark, atmospheric, and creepy, but the similarities to the master of action-horror ends there. Gone is the somewhat cumbersome, deliberate control and heavy puzzle sequences of Resident Evil, replaced with ceaseless, perfectly fluid action and very little put-

the-embell-in-the-groove mind-benders.

Dante, our stylized hero who swings a mighty sword and is quick with the hand-held firearms—all hail the power of dual flint locks—is tasked with ending the haunts of magnificently designed horrors that elegantly creep through the beautiful castle interior. Your eyes will be dazzled by one of the most amazingly detailed settings in a video game; the quiet moments are so rich in atmosphere, you'll find yourself pausing for minutes at a time to admire the surroundings. Introducing the game to the E3 attendees at Sony's kickoff conference, Mikami explained that he sent his designers to Europe to study actual castles for inspiration for the game's architecture. For the first time, an artist can actually replicate the majesty of real-world artistry, adding his own wonders to amazing effect. Games are entering a new dimension, and Devil May Cry is one of the first to lead the way. - brady flechter

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **november**
system **playstation 2**



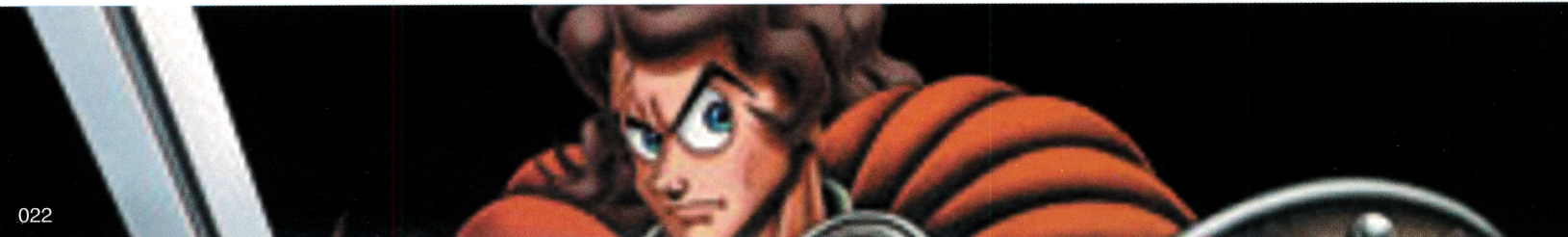
maximo



Down to the smallest detail, *Maximo: Ghosts and Glory* is the quintessential action platformer for the PS2. Nothing even comes close. Designed and produced by the accomplished David Siller (*Aero the Acrobat*, *Crash*) with lead character design by renowned Famitsu artist Susumu Matsushita, *Maximo* is more than the *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* sequel we've been dying for; it's the next evolution of a genre. Aside from an inspired storyline that sets up the action perfectly, every inch of *Maximo* screams polish and gameplay prowess. The game seems alive with movement and ambience as the ground elevates and sinks before you (you thought it was cool in 2D, wait till you see it now), ablaze with perfect lighting and effects, detailed undead foes, and a lead character that screams "make me an action figure!" *Maximo* has an array of abilities and moves that build steadily as you progress in the game, and like Arthur, when he takes the requisite amount of

hits, his armor pops off, revealing those trademark polkadot boxer shorts! As any G'n'G fan will attest, a large part of what made *Ghouls* a legendary experience was the music, and to make sure it's preserved, Capcom has commissioned the services of Tommy Tallarico, who's staying religious to the original formula; the game is sounding as good as it's looking. While *Maximo* has "Ghouls 'n' Ghosts sequel" engraved all over it, wisely, Dave and company have opted to build on the G'n'G framework, rather than be constrained by it. The end result is a melding that perfectly blends old-school gameplay with new technology and the design parameters it affords. This is the game I came to E3 to see. Well, this and Naughty Dog's new franchise, but as a pure action platform experience, *Maximo* stole the show.

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom digital studios** • available **winter**
system **playstation 2**





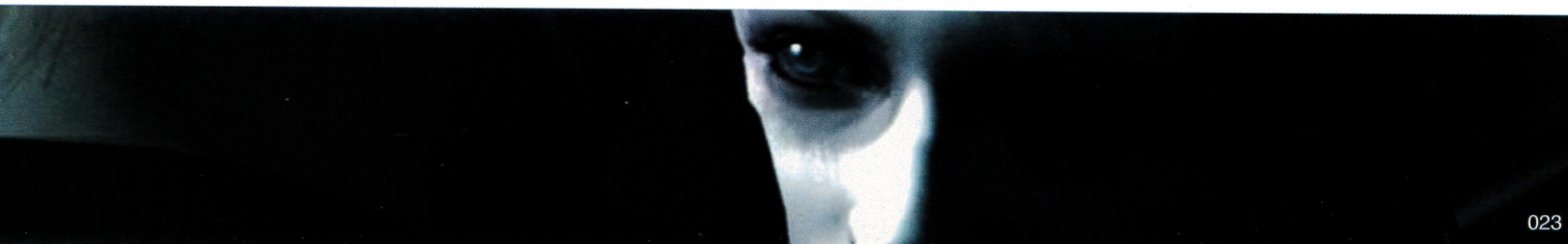
Silent Hill 2 is disgusting and twisted. Call it vile, and its creators would probably smile in approval. There has been little regard for restraint in the design of Silent Hill 2's crushingly dark images. The first game created an enormous sense of dread—it was actually frightening in its creepiness—leaving this sequel the challenging task of creating an even more gripping experience.

Playable for the first time at E3, Silent Hill 2 was a showstopper at the Konami booth, where a giant collection of video screens flashed a six-minute loop of one disturbing scene after another. Especially lovely was the birthing scene of one of the game's creatures, which resembles a skinned giant covered in afterbirth. Freed to pump extra processing strength into the onscreen images

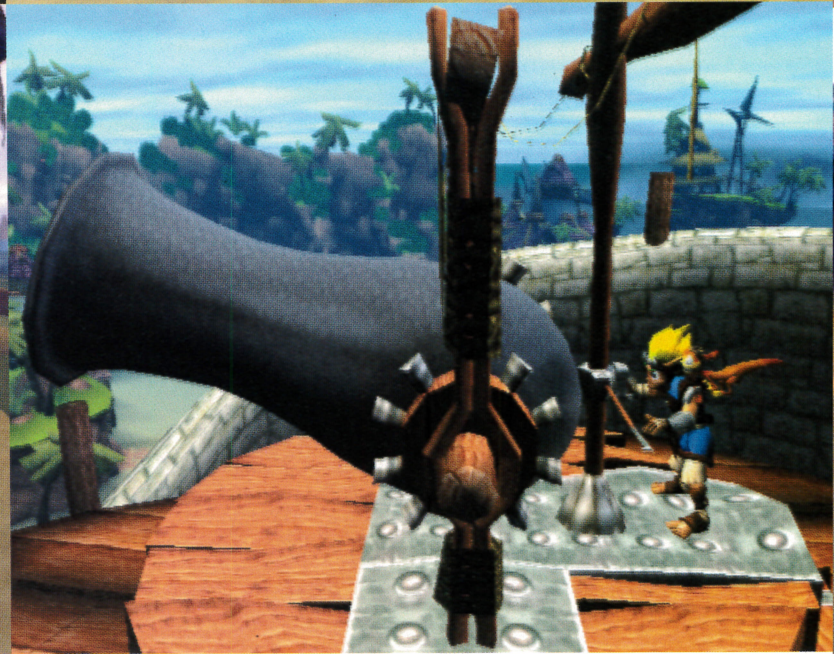
because of the fog-shrouded limited view, the PlayStation 2 has given the monster designs an incredible dense level of detail and effects. The impact of the main character striking down with a club over the fleshy bodies of the monsters is cringe-inducing.

Everyone should look forward to the monster menage a trois; what else do you call an entangled mess of three creatures thrashing about in a disturbingly graphic manner as a person hides, watching in a closet? Some showgoers were actually offended. The rest of us were praising the game's audacity of inspired horror. - brady flechter

publisher **konami** • developer **kcet** • available **september**
system **playstation 2**



jak and daxter

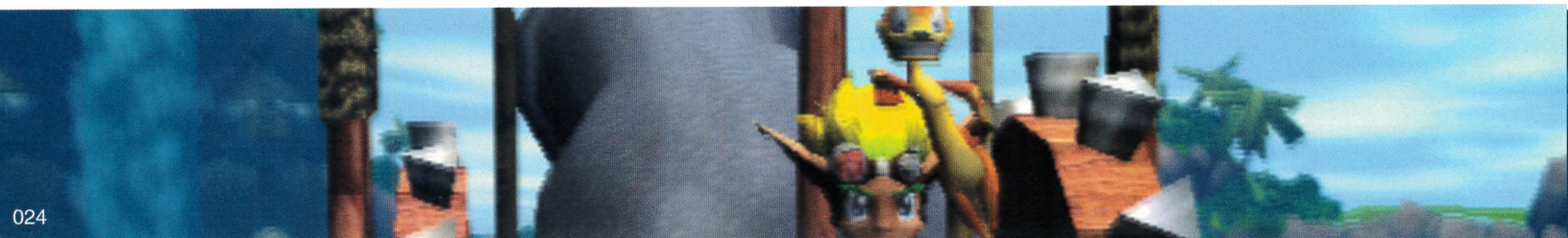


From humble beginnings back in the day, I had a friend at Universal Studios who's father was a high-ranking executive, enabling him to sneak out a VHS tape of a game that would later be called Crash Bandicoot, long before anyone in the game industry had seen it. We didn't know what it was called or even who was making it, but it was by far the most amazing thing we'd ever seen on the PlayStation, or anywhere else for that matter. It was the hardest time we ever had sitting on an exclusive, but we kept it zipped until the official word came out. I've known Jason, Andy and the Naughty Dog team since they made Way of the Warrior out of their apartment (recruiting neighbors to digitize the characters), so you can imagine my jubilation when I discovered they were at the helm. A friend to the hardcore gamer if there ever was one, Jason has always been all about going that extra mile for the player, which is one of the reasons why ND's games never load. At this year's E3,

those same guys who produced games from the living room sofa were center stage at Sony's press conference, leading the way in PS2 technology as they presented their latest creation, Jak and Daxter—a manga-design-inspired, action, platforming, adventure, task-based game that promises to once again reinvent a category. Space doesn't allow for a fraction of what I have to say about Jak and Daxter (that'll have to wait until we begin our tirade of coverage), but to whet your appetite: the game never loads, and you can see the entire world you are in, all the time—an astonishing feat of design, programming, and dedication. It's games like Jak and Daxter that nailed the coffin shut for Dreamcast and that will serve as the high water mark for all developers of similar fare to strive for in the future.

- dave halverson

publisher sony • **developer** naughty dog • **available** winter
system playstation 2





luigi's mansion

Bemused might be the best word to describe most people's first reaction to Luigi's Mansion. This was not a Mario 64 sequel. Apparently, that game is coming, due to debut at Nintendo's SpaceWorld in October (premiering a new Mario game outside of Japan is unheard of). But of course, there had to be a brothers Mario game to launch with the system, so Luigi's Mansion carries the mantle, though with a far more unconventional and gimmicky approach than anyone could have predicted.

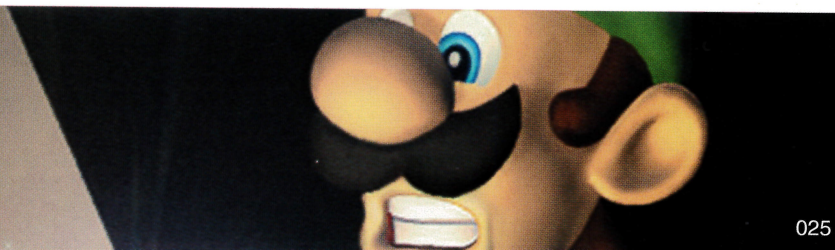
Succinctly, Luigi's Mansion is a riff on Ghostbusters, with Luigi armed with a flashlight and vacuum cleaner, seeking out and sucking up ghosts. This was the extent of the gameplay shown at E3, and if the concept sounds a little one dimen-

sional, it felt that way too. However, it also felt and looked brilliant, with the inspired, ergonomically perfected Gamecube controller facilitating wonderfully fluid Luigi movement, and the game's real time lighting and shadow effects highlighting the apparent depth of 3D talent in Nintendo's new hardware. And in the realm of character animation and modeling, Luigi's Mansion, as expected, showed off a totally unique style of polygonal manipulation, with a rubbery-faced Luigi running through a gamut of exaggerated, cartoon-y expressions.

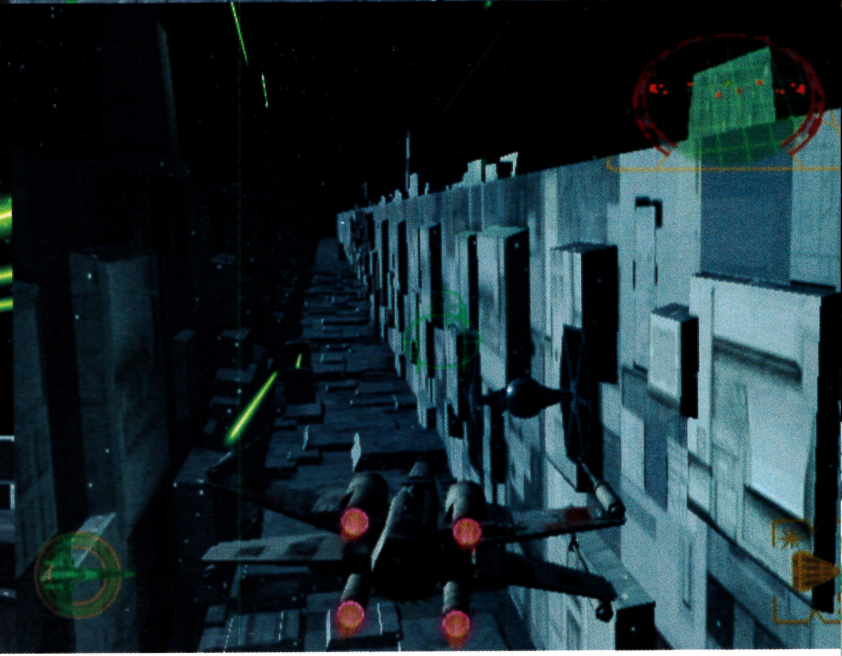
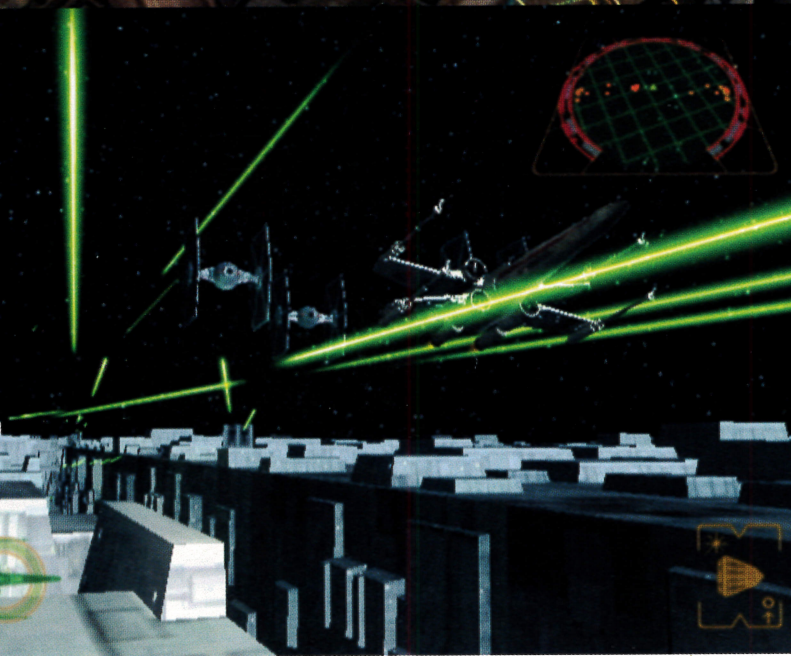
We have little doubt that there will be far more to this game when it's finished than what we were shown, but we've seen enough to be very excited indeed.

- mike hobbs

publisher **nintendo** • developer **nintendo** • available **november**
system **gamecube**



star wars: rogue leader



Out of all the new GameCube games shown at E3, none gathered bigger crowds than LucasArt's *Star Wars: Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II*. Players stood in line for well over an hour to be among the first to try out the next evolution of the virtual Star Wars universe, and not only was it worth the wait, but the experience was just staggering. Factor 5 has taken everything they've learned from making games like *Rogue Squadron* and *Battle for Naboo* and kicked it up to heavenly levels in *Rogue Leader*. Instead of always fighting over a planet's surface like in *Rogue Squadron*, some of the battles take place in deep space, including all-out dogfights against the Imperial Fleet that come as close to recreating the action in the movie as anything that's been done. Three levels were shown at E3: an epic space battle where the rebel fleet battles a Star Destroyer and legions of TIE

Fighters; a raid on Bespin where you must fly into the bowels of the city in an A-Wing; and a re-creation of the Battle of Yavin where you must take out the Death Star defenses and then fly the famous trench, complete with an appearance by Darth Vader and the Falcon. All three demos were incredibly impressive, from the amazingly rich hues on Bespin to the complex architecture of the Death Star, where every bump and alcove of the massive battle station is actually constructed, not just texture-mapped. The multiple ships (including X-Wing, B-Wing and more to be announced) handled beautifully, and new play innovations like a targeting computer (where the screen goes orange and you can see the enemies easily, just like in the movie) were very cool. The Force is definitely strong with this one.

- chris hoffman

publisher lucasarts • **developer** factor 5 • **available** november
system gamecube



kingdom hearts

publisher **square** • developer **square ea** • available **fall 2002**
system **playstation 2**

When Square first announced that they were collaborating with Disney on a PlayStation 2 project, we all kind of scoffed at the idea. But the brief trailer of Kingdom Hearts unveiled during E3 hinted at something truly magical in the works. Characters designed by Tetsuya Nomura star alongside perennial favorites Donald Duck and Goofy in a role-playing game that appears to be unexpectedly serious in tone. Over 100 people have been working on the title for two years, and Square is promising an epic tale unlike anything we've experienced before. At the very least, the sight of Dumbo as he's called forth by a summon spell should elicit smiles from even the most jaded of gamers.

- steve thomason



It shall forever remain a mystery as to why the original Wave Race stood for so long as the epitome of water physics modeling. More powerful hardware in the form of Sega's Dreamcast never saw anything approach it, and it is only in the last couple of months with Rainbow Studio's Splashdown on PS2 that anything has come close to the original. But now, Nintendo has returned to the genre it has had pretty much to itself, and on GameCube, the end result is astonishing.

In E3 form, Wave Race: Blue Storm showed off enhanced versions of three tracks from the original game, and this familiarity only served to highlight how far we've come. Just wait till you see the water in this game. Its reflective, refractive nature makes its wetness palpable, a sensation helped along in no small part by a very realistic lens splashing which often coats the screen in a cascade of shimmering dampness. - mike hobbs

publisher **nintendo** • developer **nst** • available **november**
system **gamecube**

wave race: blue storm



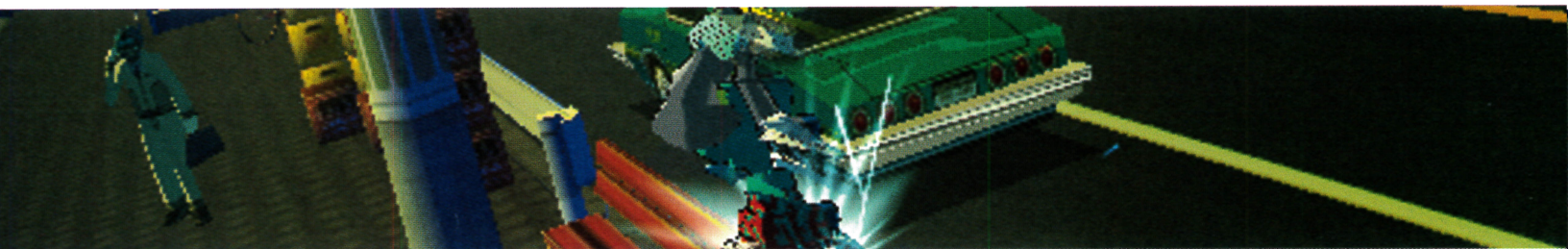
et set radio future



publisher **sega** • developer **smilebit** • available **q4 2001**
system **xbox**

Just when as we were contemplating dubbing the Xbox 3DO II, we got a look at Jet Grind Radio Future and came unglued. This game is insanely gorgeous taking the whole cel shading craze to new unseen levels. You can now see far and wide, and everything has a solid look and feel. Basically if you liked it before, you'll love it now and if you loved it, well, wear a diaper or something. For me this is the game that I'll buy the console for, unless I get a free one, which I doubt after that 3DO remark. Future has a cool 4-player split screen mode and a new trick system that'll give you more to do while you're flying through the air, running from the fuzz, rousting rival gangs and painting the city. But I wonder if you'll only be able to use green?

- dave halverson



tony hawk 3



publisher **activision** • developer **neversoft** • available **fall 2001**
system **playstation 2**

The Tony Hawk phenomenon continues with the third installment set to debut on PS2 this fall. Featuring graphical enhancements beyond what was expected, it's one of the most visually stunning titles we've seen on the system. The myriad real-world locales are bursting with detail and skater animations are smoother and more life-like than ever. Perhaps even more exciting is that the game will be playable online, either through a Local Area Network (LAN) or the Internet, once Sony's broadband adaptor becomes available. New tricks, an improved career mode, and an expanded skate park editor round out what will surely be the definitive pro skating game. An Xbox version is slated for a winter release.

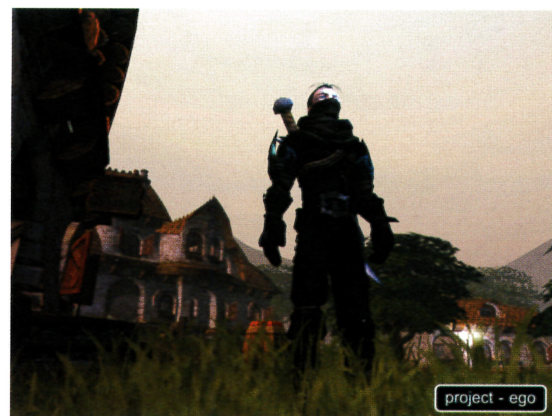
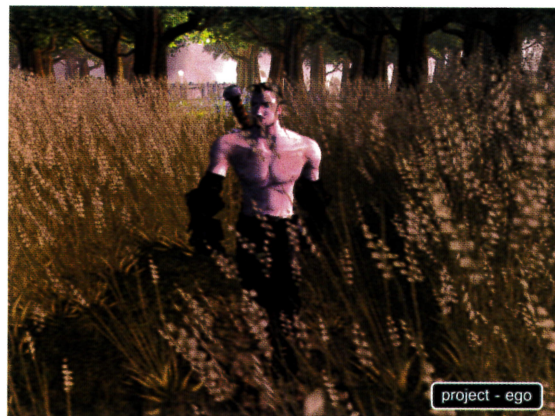
- steve thomason



project - ego

publisher microsoft • **developer** big blue box • **available** holiday 2002
system xbox

While it still has 18 months of development remaining, Peter Molyneux's Project - Ego was one of the most unique and ambitious games at the show. It is, perhaps, video gaming's first true role-playing game. You begin with your character at the age of fifteen and how he leads the rest of his life is entirely up to you. If you want to heroically save a small village, you can. If you want to woo some pretty young lass and get married, you can do that too. You can even mug an unsuspecting passerby and steal the poor man's trousers should it tickle your fancy. But every action you take affects the world around you and its inhabitants. The ultimate goal, of course, is to become famous...or infamous. The choice is yours. - steve thomason



Ever since Final Fight and countless Neo Geo titles helped set the standard, the beat-'em-up well has run pretty dry. Since the genre received its final shot in the arm back in 1995 with Sega's move-intensive, techno-inspired Streets of Rage Series, many have tried and failed to resurrect the once mighty genre. At this year's E3, as I moseyed by the Rockstar stand I saw the game that would finally reawaken the giant, State of Emergency—and what a concept it is. Today's technology and some mildly warped minds have come together to produce the world's first riot simulator, a game that's as funny as it is fun and downright insane. The game is actually based on the overthrow of the world by an oppressive regime, so the ensuing riots are a public revolt. You get to run around with a bazooka and raise holy hell all for the greater good! Game features include looting stores, bombing cars, smashing everything in site and basically going completely f***ing mad with over 100 people onscreen simultaneously! - dave halverson

publisher rockstar • **developer** vis • **available** november
system playstation 2



wipeout fusion

publisher **sony** • developer **sony** • available **tba**
system **playstation 2**

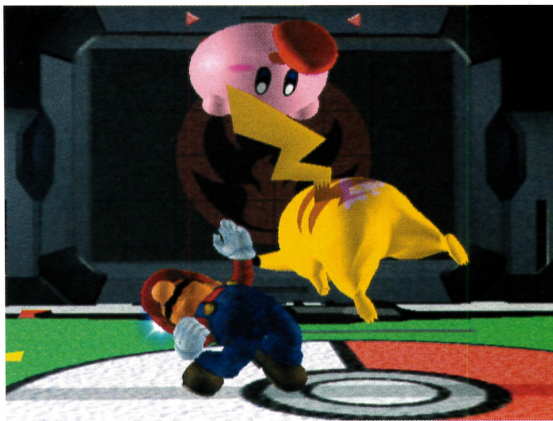


Where has this game been? No doubt its gestation has not been helped by the oft-reported staff hiccups, but we should have seen Wipeout Fusion in playable form ages ago, and we should have seen more than the one track on offer here at E3. But after playing this one track, all such quibbles were forgotten, for it represented exactly what we wanted to see—a beautiful version of the original 32-bit series. The course on display dipped and soared through misty clouds and industrial grandstands with all the visual flair we've come to expect from the series. The control was predictably smooth, and only a bit of rather curious and undoubtedly anomalous polygon popping marred the overall experience, but we're expecting great things from Wipeout Fusion. - mike hobbs



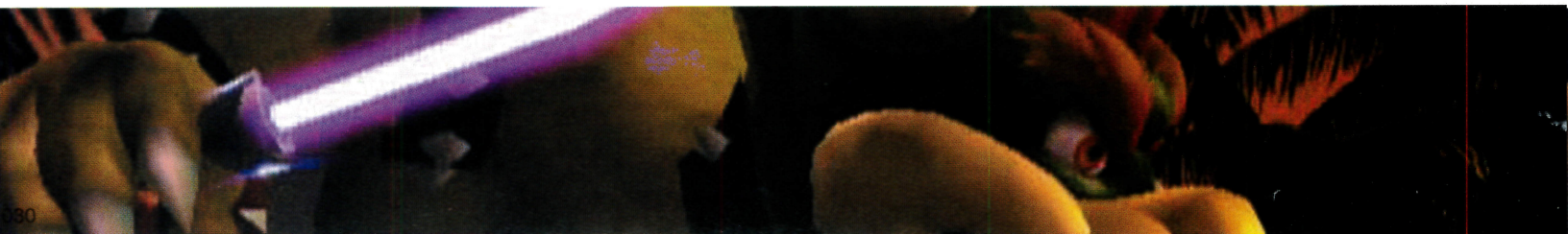
super smash bros: melee

publisher **nintendo** • developer **hal** • available **november**
system **gamecube**



When Nintendo unveiled the GameCube at E3, Peter Main stated that they had a hard time deciding which of their famous characters would appear at the system launch. Mario? Link? Donkey Kong? Kirby? Then it occurred to them: why not deliver all the characters in one of the most requested sequels to an N64 game ever? And so Super Smash Brothers Melee was born. The gameplay hasn't changed much since last time: four-player action, simple controls, innovative power-ups, and knock-your-opponent-to-his-doom gameplay are still the highlights. Mario, Princess Peach, Yoshi, Bowser, Donkey Kong, Kirby, Captain Falcon, Fox McCloud, Samus Aran, Ness, Pikachu, Link, Sheik (from Ocarina of Time) and Ice Climber were all playable and they look amazing, but it was the gorgeous introductory sequences that stole the show. Fans of the original will be blown away.

- chris hoffman



publisher **tecmo** • developer **team ninja** • available **november**
system **xbox**

Dead or Alive 3 was only shown on video, but it was a video that made showgoers' collective jaws drop. Character models and animations have been improved upon yet again, and the level of realism demonstrated in the interactive backgrounds was downright awe-inspiring. This Xbox-exclusive fighter is currently slated as a launch title. And yes, the series does retain its trademark bounciness. - steve thomason



dead or alive 3

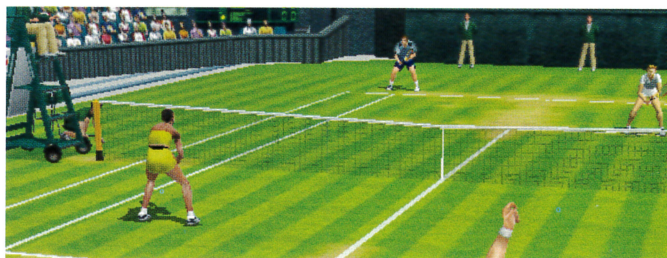


publisher **sega** • developer **sega** • available **fall**
system **dreamcast**

Behind NFL 2K, Virtua Tennis was Sega's strongest sports title for Dreamcast. It's achilles heel being the lack of the women's draw, Sega Sports Tennis 2K2 has that and more going for it. Just imagine positioning your camera behind Kournikova's buns and start warming up the old Dreamcast. By taking the game out of the arcade and honing it more as a pure console experience we're already polishing up the sports game of the year trophy for this one. - dave halverson



sega sports tennis 2k



publisher **interplay** • developer **snowblind studios** • available **fall**
system **playstation 2**

Baldurs Gate is one of the most highly regarded names in PC gaming and Dark Alliance appears up to the task of extending that legacy into the console realm. Snowblind Studios has utilized the power of PS2 to conjure up some amazing visuals, and the water effects in particular are quite convincing. It's more of an action-RPG than the Dungeons & Dragons simulators of its brethren, but the heart and soul of the series remains intact. - steve thomason



baldurs gate: dark alliance



publisher **infogrames** • developer **digital extremes** • available **spring 2002**
system **xbox**

Leading next year's online charge for Xbox is the phenomenal looking Unreal Championship. The latest installment of this popular FPS franchise will support an incredible 16 players online simultaneously while introducing a number of exciting new gameplay additions. Foremost among these is the inclusion of vehicles, such as hover-cycles, two-person jeeps, and even a personnel carrier. - steve thomason



unreal championship



pikmin



publisher **nintendo** • developer **ead** • available **november**
system **gamecube**



Eccentric? Yep. Strange? Indeed. Genius? Probably. Pikmin is the latest game from Shigeru Miyamoto, and it just might be the next big thing. As a spaceman who crash-landed on a planet, you get to raise and control the insect-like Pikmin to do your bidding and help you get off the planet. This all-new take on the strategy genre might not sound like much, but after just the short E3 demo, the addictive nature of Pikmin was readily apparent.

- chris hoffman

james bond



publisher **ea** • developer **ea** • available **fall**
system **playstation 2**



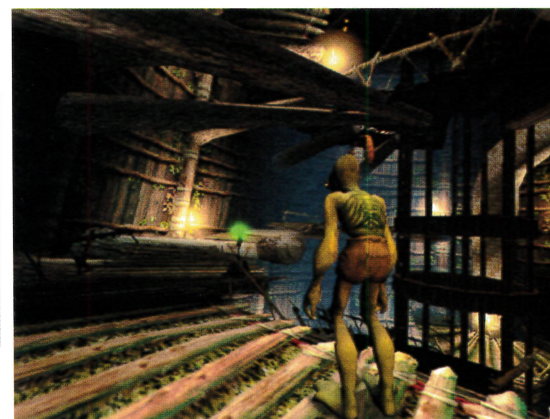
Last year's The World Is Not Enough owed much to the original Golden Eye on Nintendo 64, yet originality isn't everything: it was a superb first-person shooter powered by awesome level design, ceaseless action, superb visual presentation and a hugely successful manipulation of the Bond theme. Next stop for Bond: PlayStation 2, where the apoplectic action, esoteric gadgets and irrepressible terrorist cells come together again for this welcome sequel. Can't wait for this one.

- brady fiechter

oddworld: munch's oddysee



publisher **microsoft** • developer **oddworld inhabitants** • available **november**
system **xbox**



The second chapter in Oddworld's famed quintology, Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee, seems to be turning into something great. Not only does it let you play as Abe and Munch, not only does it let you control how the environments and ecosystems evolve, not only does it look simply amazing, but the game also has a wealth of complex, intricate mechanics, like taking control of numerous machines and enemy characters. Gameplay seems very deep -- you can find multiple solutions to each level -- and worth the wait.

- chris hoffman

star fox adventures: dinosaur planet



publisher **nintendo** • developer **rare** • available **november**
system **gamecube**



At last year's E3, Dinosaur Planet looked likely to be the last great N64 games. Now it's scheduled to be one of the first great GameCube adventures. With its new Star Fox Adventure title, Dinosaur Planet lets you play as Fox McCloud as he explores a strange world populated with dinosaurs but dominated by the evil General Scales. A variety of missions let you battle in 3D combat and adventuring, ride on the backs of dinosaurs and, yes, fly Fox's famous Arwing.

- chris hoffman

socom



frequency



One of Sony's most impressive PS2 surprises at E3 was the military FPS Socom. This realistic take on the genre emphasizes strategic multiplayer deathmatching. Splashdown, a Waverace-style racer, was equally

amazing. Also shown by Sony were the music game Frequency, futuristic racer Kinetica, and their port of Drakan. On PS1, Sony had Syphon Filter 3 and the super-deformed Twisted Metal Small Brawl.



mickey



kameo

Nintendo's GameCube lineup is impressive indeed. Eternal Darkness was finally revealed in its upgraded form, animal-morphing babe Kameo showed her stuff in Kameo: Elements of Power, Raven Blade demonstrated serious adventuring on GameCube, and NBA Courtside 2002 showed how

the franchise has evolved. Only shown on video were the amazing-looking Disney's Mickey (working title), Metroid Prime, Donkey Kong Racing, Mario Kart, and Animal Forest (which looks like a direct port of the Japanese N64 game).

air force delta storm



frogger



banjo - kazooie



diddy kong pilot

It looks like great Game Boy Advance games will be coming all year long from Nintendo and beyond. Advance Wars (military strategy) comes in September, the beautiful RPG Golden Sun hits in October, and Wario Land 4 and addictive puzzler Donkey Kong Coconut Crackers

arrive in November. Rare has the mother load in 2002 with Diddy Kong Pilot, Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge, and Sabrewulf (a comic Killer Instinct adventure spin-off) all on the way. But best of all is the sequel we've all been waiting for - the awesome-looking Metroid IV.

Of course there was MGS2, but Konami had more than that. Air Force Delta Storm will be Konami's initial Xbox offering, while Police 911 (complete with motion sensing), Age of Empires 2 and Frogger: The Great Quest are PS2-bound. Konami also

reaffirmed that Ephemeral Fantasia is still on track for PS2. Three Jurassic Park III games are coming on GBA, and Konami's ESPN license is still going strong with many offerings on all platforms.

shenmue II



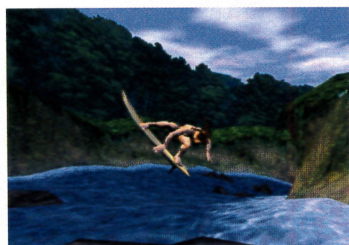
Dreamcast ain't dead yet. Finally, footage of Toejam & Earl 3 was shown, as was Shenmue II. Upgrades to all Sega's sports games are still coming to DC, including NCAA College Football 2K2. Sega revealed

that 10 GameCube games are on the way, including Phantasy Star Online, Super Monkey Ball, and Virtua Striker 3. Meanwhile, NBA 2K2 and NFL 2K2 are also coming to Xbox and PS2.

super monkey ball



tarzan



Tarzan is making his way to the PS2 courtesy of Ubi Soft. This one takes liberties with the movie and includes many more surfing-style stages along with adventuring levels.

Rayman M (the multiplayer Rayman game) was very impressive, and Batman Vengeance was also shown. Additionally, Grandia II comes to PS2 later this year.

dragon warrior VII



It's Dragon Warrior, Dragon Warrior, and nothing but from Enix. Enix says they're aiming to bring out Dragon Warrior VII before the end of

the year. Dragon Warrior Monsters 2 and Dragon Warrior III, both for GBC, are coming this summer.

medal of honor



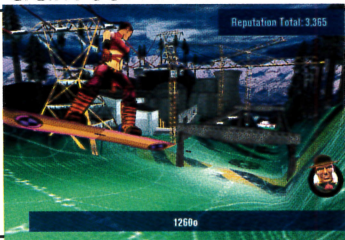
EA's Madden NFL 2002 looked great on all systems, but on GameCube it stood out as one of the few third-party titles at the show. Also very impressive at EA

was Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, although the PS2 and Xbox versions weren't shown - just PC.

smackdown!



dark summit



Most of THQ's offerings were Nickelodeon licenses like Rugrats and Jimmy Neutron, but a few games stood out. Dark Summit is a unique objective-based snowboard-

ing game for Xbox, and SmackDown!: Just Bring It looks rock-solid. WWF Road to Wrestlemania (developed by Natsume) was also announced on GBA.

Natsume's Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland takes the series in more of a true role-playing direction, and also to a new console - PS2. Natsume also showed Pilot

Academy (PS2), Reel Fishing Wild (DC), Skydiving Extreme (PS), Lufia: The Legend Returns (GBC) and Harvest Moon 3 (GBC).



harvest moon



hoshigami

Atlus only had one new game at E3: the PS1 strategy-RPG Hoshigami: Ruining Blue Earth. Fans of Final Fantasy Tactics or Vandal-Hearts should check it out.

Capcom didn't have any surprises, but Capcom vs. SNK 2, with six fighting styles and 44 characters, was amazing. Mega Man X6

seemed very traditional, but the news of changing level structures and random boss-es should make this one very entertaining.



capcom vs snk 2



project gotham

As expected, Microsoft had a wealth of Xbox games at the show. Aside from the titles featured elsewhere this issue, games like Project Gotham Racing, Nightcaster (fantasy adventure), Azurik (also fantasy

adventure), Bloodwake (vehicular combat), Bruce Lee (fighting action), Amped (snowboarding), NBA Inside Drive and NFL Fever lead the Xbox charge.

Third parties also had plenty of Xbox games on hand. TDK's Shrek captured the look and feel of the movie remarkably well, and games like Activision's Tony Hawk

2X, Crave's UFC: Tapout, Fox's Buffy the Vampire Slayer, THQ's Raw is War and LucasArt's Star Wars: Obi-Wan looked pretty sweet too.



shrek



shadowman 2

Acclaim's showing was smaller than usual, but there were several games of note, such as Turok: Evolution (PS2), Shadowman: 2econd Coming (PS2),

Extreme G3 (PS2, GameCube), and Legends of Wrestling (PS2, GC) which features stars of yesteryear like Terry Funk, Jerry Lawler and Kamala.

e3

2001

> editors' view

dave halverson



personal top 10

1. maximo
2. jak and daxter
3. luigi's mansion
4. final fantasy X
5. jet grind radio future
6. star fox adventures: dinosaur planet
7. devil may cry
8. gun valkyrie
9. wipeout fusion
10. wario land 4

I came to this year's traffic snarled, hot, crowded E3 to see Maximo, Jak & Daxter, the Xbox, and the Game Cube. Maximo gave me a wood Bob Dole would envy in about one second flat. Produced by my old pal David Siller, not only is it loosely based on Ghouls 'n Ghosts, one of my all time favorite side-scrollers, but with Dave at the helm the physics and overall polish are phenomenal. As amazing as Maximo is, Jak and Daxter is just as, but in completely different ways (so pinch me, I'm up two). On the hardware side however, things did not fare as well. The Xbox, outside of Jet Grind Future, Gun Valkyrie, and Project Ego, was looking pretty green, and although Nintendo helped pick up the pieces-with too many ports, no Mario, and a first person Metroid-they still have a way

to go. I predict next year that Nintendo and Sony will go toe to toe for the undisputed heavyweight title. The Advance was Nintendo's big bright shining star this year. 2D is back, and that alone makes me happier than I can possibly express.

"Maximo gave me a wood Bob Dole would envy in about one second flat."

brady fiechter



So you're standing in a dense forest of endless video screens, scintillating light shows, giant video-game icons, networks of steel walkways and labyrinthine meeting rooms, spewing fountains and vibrating theaters and legally naked women and herds of hungover gamers plowing through the thicket while strapped with a tonage of equipment needed to track the entire adventure, and you're thinking to yourself, video games have arrived. Big Time.

Ten short years ago you were playing games, enjoying the hobby of little objects that went bang-pop-zip onscreen. Today you are experiencing the art of video games, sucked into complete worlds, spinning on the gravity of rich storytelling and visual wonder, populated by creatures that dazzle the eye and excite the gameplay senses with an awesome level of interaction and virtual realism. Games have

changed, and are changing. Big time.

E3 2001 was a delight, a look into a bright and exciting future of a new level of gamemaking. Nostalgia may keep you grounded in the past, but this once idiosyncratic, intimate form of entertainment is ascending dizzying heights of creativity and visual artistry, leaving behind the antiquated notion that games are just for kids and the socially stunted man hiding in the corner of a bedroom.

"E3 2001 was a delight, a look into a bright and exciting future..."



personal top 10

1. devil may cry
2. final fantasy X
3. silent hill 2
4. metal gear solid 2
5. ico
6. jak and daxter
7. luigi's mansion
8. wave race
9. maximo
10. kingdom hearts

mike hobbs



personal top 10

1. metal gear solid 2
2. final fantasy X
3. ico
4. luigi's mansion
5. rogue leader: rogue squadron 2
6. jak & daxter
7. maximo
8. wave race blue storm
9. pikmin
10. wipeout fusion

Gamecube was all I cared about going into this E3. I missed the last Space World, so this was to be my chance to see Nintendo's new machine up close and personal, and even play games on it. Well, it was everything I had hoped for. The controller was perfected, making Microsoft's bloated effort look like a joke, and as I had hoped, the games had a wholly unique look and feel, just as Nintendo games always do. Of course, I was disappointed that there wasn't a new Mario game there, but I was amazed at the quality of Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II and uniqueness of Pikmin and Luigi's Mansion.

However, contrary to my expectations, it was the PlayStation 2 that absolutely stole the show. Games like ICO, Jak and Daxter, Maximo, MGS2, Devil May Cry, Gran

Turismo 3, Wipeout Fusion, Silent Hill 2 -- I could go on. What a stellar lineup. How Microsoft is going to compete against all this and more is completely beyond me. As far as I'm concerned, it's going to be a Sony and Nintendo year. Who could have imagined that three years ago?

"...contrary to my expectations, it was the PlayStation 2 that absolutely stole the show."

chris hoffman

For me, there was no clear-cut dominating force at E3, just a lot of great games. The GameCube looks like it will be a fantastic system when it hits this fall, the PS2 library is really growing strong with its second and third generation of software, and even the Xbox had an impressive showing. A lot of the most exciting games at E3 were titles we'd seen before, such as Metal Gear 2, Silent Hill 2, Devil May Cry and Final Fantasy X, but that didn't lessen their appeal at the show. On the other hand, Nintendo's playable debut of GameCube was terribly exciting, as their combination of new concepts, classic characters and visuals never before imagined on a Nintendo system looks like a great foundation for another strong system. Meanwhile, games like Oddworld, Jet Set Radio Future, Dark Summit and DOA3 prove that Xbox might be

something special after all. If all three systems are as strong later this year as they were at the show, 2001 will be exciting indeed.

"The GameCube looks like it will be a fantastic system when it hits this fall, the PS2 library is really growing strong with its second and third generation of software, and even the Xbox had an impressive showing."



personal top 10

1. final fantasy X
2. metal gear solid 2
3. kingdom hearts
4. oddworld: munch's oddyssey
5. capcom vs snk 2
6. jet grind radio future
7. super smash bros. melee
8. rogue leader: rogue squadron 2
9. jak and daxter
10. final fight one

steve thomason



personal top 10

1. final fantasy X
2. metal gear solid 2
3. silent hill 2
4. kingdom hearts
5. ico
6. devil may cry
7. luigi's mansion
8. rogue leader: rogue squadron 2
9. project - ego
10. jak and daxter

In my view, Sony completely dominated this year's E3. Both Gamecube and Xbox enjoyed impressive debuts, but the amount of quality software on display for PlayStation 2 was almost overwhelming. I don't think a single console has ever boasted such an incredible line-up. We knew coming in that FFX, MGS 2, and Silent Hill 2 would be amazing, but both Ico and Kingdom Hearts proved compelling as well. Add in such other gems as Jak and Daxter, Devil May Cry, and Maximo and you can see why this was Sony's show.

As for the other two console manufacturers, I thought Nintendo had a much stronger showing than Microsoft. Gamecube games looked slightly better than I expected, and the controller is an absolute triumph of design. Meanwhile,

Dead or Alive 3 and Jet Grind Radio Future, my most eagerly anticipated Xbox titles, were only shown on video, and the pad felt bulky and uncomfortable. Overall, I was impressed with both systems, but walked away more excited about the Gamecube launch. On a final note, Sega's drastically reduced presence at this year's show was the only low point of an otherwise unbelievable E3.

"...but the amount of quality software on display for PlayStation 2 was almost overwhelming."

ico

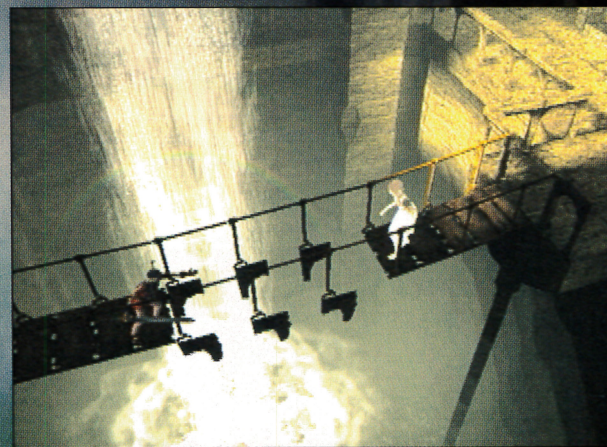
Sony's secret treasure creates wonder in its quiet atmosphere

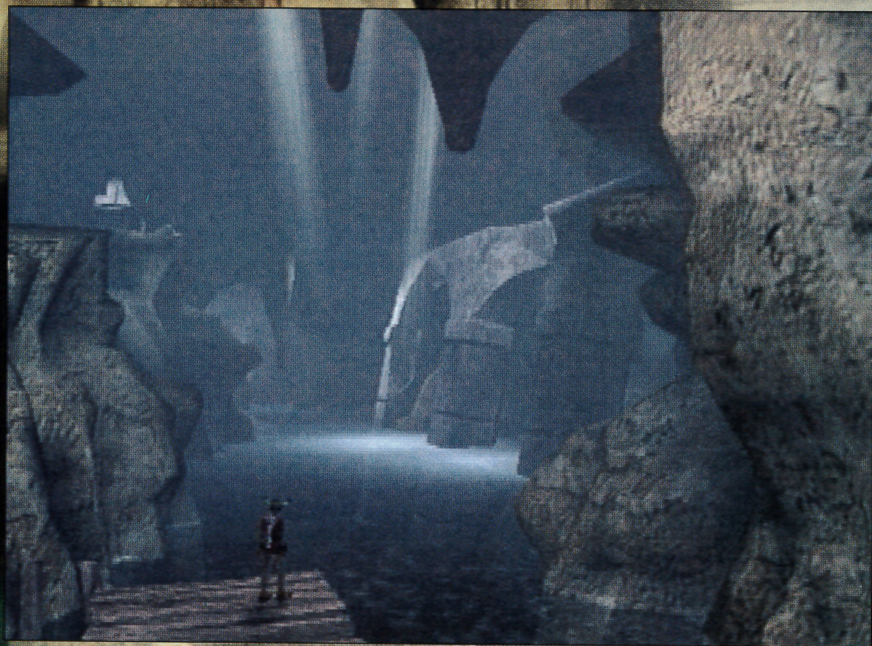
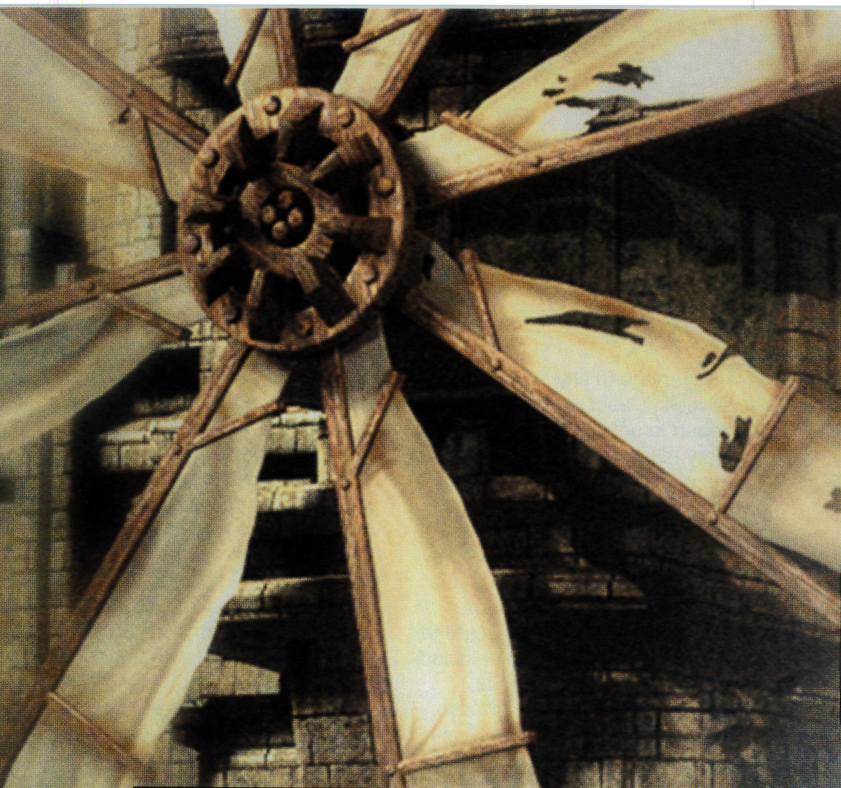
ICO is a gentle, deeply serene, beautifully atmospheric adventure game that builds a sense of wonder that's powerful in its hold. A year ago this game couldn't have existed. But now, with gamemaking craft elevated by the next level of hardware, new treasures are consistently being created. And ICO is one of the richest of these new games. "It's getting to the point where you almost forget your playing a game," enthused an editor last month during the game's private demo—an observation I can't help but agree with after completing ICO's sprawling quest. You are completely lost to ICO's world, not because the polygon count is enormous or the textures are photorealistic or the design is so perfect that nothing points to an artificial existence—but because everything comes together effectively and convincingly, and the mood and setting is so tranquil and distinctly inviting that the game looks and feels unlike anything before it. Its purpose is pure fantasy. It achieves a surreal effect by desaturating the

color palette and casting a harsh light over the entire setting, creating the look of an overexposed photograph.

The game takes place primarily in a castle, where the hero, Ico, is banished to die, a punishment handed down by his village elders after the innocent boy is born with horns. In a dream, Ico envisions saving a trapped princess. He awakens and finds his vision is to be a reality, and so the game begins.

The princess' presence adds a wonderfully original dynamic to a durable gameplay path. Ico must climb chains and make long leaps of faith, move boxes and solve casual puzzles to progress through the abandoned castle—all situations familiar to any seasoned gamer. But with the princess tagging along, everything becomes more meaningful and deceptively fresh. Calling for the princess to jump across a damaged bridge, catching her hand as she misses the other side, threatens to take your breath away: the sense of depth and





space is so convincing, vertiginous jumps become uncommonly visceral.

Ico is routinely faced with prodigious tasks of exploration and discovery. So much more than a simple journey of locate-the-ledge-and-jump, the game turns every situation into a sequence of complex tasks that point to a main goal—usually the clearance of a less-daunting path for the princess to cross. An example of one of the more engaging tasks occurs

early, when Ico's progression is halted by a wide crevice in an enormous room of the castle. Could that lattice of rafters literally hundreds of feet above be accessible somehow? You bet. Scale several window pains, streams of brilliant sunlight reaching to the other side of the room, carefully walk to a hanging chandelier; jump down, damage the chandelier, forcing it to fracture a long walkway on the second level below, in turn cracking a pillar; back on the ground floor is a bomb, which is ignited with Ico's stick to release the pillar over the chasm. A walkway is formed. And

just wait till you get to the windmill, admire the reflection in the palpably real water, climb to the gear room and... OK, enough of giving away Ico's many delights.

When you do finally make it closer and closer to the castle's exit (or is there really an exit to freedom?), the obstacles become more daunting, the monsters a little bigger. The only weapon available is a small staff, later replaced by a sword. There are no pickups, power-ups, health bar or item screen.

Grabbing the princess' hand to coax her to the next area reveals another of the game's strengths: exquisite animation and physical presence. You feel her awkward clench on Ico's arm as she stumbles along; her walk and reactions impart a delicacy, an almost innocent quality. Personality grows from the animation, and the wonderful character designs only enhance the enjoyment of their presence in the environment. So delicate are the designs that they look like bleached pencil sketches.

Ico has innocuously been described as a "casual adventure" by Sony. I'd prefer to call it an interactive dream. - brady fletcher



mobile suit gundam: journey to jaburo

publisher **bandai** • developer **bandai** • available **august**
system **playstation 2**

Let's face it. There has never been a truly spectacular Gundam game. Probably the closest is Gundam Side Story 0079 on Dreamcast, but this mostly competent affair was so cumbersome in its control and feel that it made piloting the GMs far more a chore than a pleasure. It was this apparent realism that appealed to some, but not to me.

In this regard, things are looking up for the Gundam franchise with this latest effort to reach U.S. shores, Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo. Appearing on the fast-developing PS2, this

game presents a far more appealing look and feel, with its friendly third-person view and responsive, if not exactly fast, control (these are giant mechs after all).

So the dynamic qualities of the game are fairly well sorted, which makes the various visual frills true accents, rather than the reason to actually spend time with the game. Copious CG cut scenes and classic pilot chatter, complete with anime inserts, provide the perfect Gundam atmosphere. Fans should eat this up.

- **mike hobbs**

onimusha 2

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **2002**
system **playstation 2**

Never one to shy away from sequels, Capcom has already begun to unveil Onimusha 2. The story takes place 13 years after the original as the new protagonist, Yagyu Jyuubei, returns from traveling to find that his hometown has been attacked by Nobunaga Oda. Aside from the infamous warlord Nobunaga, other characters are expected to return from the first game, including the female ninja Kaede. Whether Samanosuke will also make an appearance is as yet unknown. Graphically, the game

again features polygonal characters over pre-rendered backdrops, but this time the environments are more varied and brimming with animated elements.

In a tradition established with its predecessor, Onimusha 2's main character was modeled after a famous Japanese actor; this time the late Masadu Matura. The development team intends to provide this character with better depth, however, and will strive to make the game's narrative more involving as well.

- **steve thomason**



evil twin

publisher ubi soft • **developer** in utero • **available** fall
system playstation 2

Evil Twin, the wonderfully dark and unmistakably French action adventure game that graced our cover a year ago is finally at hand. And while it's still on tap for the Dreamcast (becoming the consoles brightest light) the PS2 version pictured below is now slated for a simultaneous release. Though still unfinished as it enters the crucial tweaking stages ET is looking every bit as dark and twisted as we hoped it would be,

in fact, the characters and architecture concepts look even more sinister peeled from their pages, even though they're a little sparse in terms of actual poly count. The gameplay, which incorporates action rpg elements, platforming, and exploration draws its diversity from a first person slingshot and the ability to transform into an alternate being. We'll have an in depth preview on Evil Twin next month. - dave halverson



drakan 2

publisher sony • **developer** surreal software • **available** august
system playstation 2

There's only one thing I love more than dragons, and that's shapely video game babes. Luckily Drakan II has both so even if it sucked, which it so does not, I'd probably buy it anyway. In D2 (hey, where have I heard that before?), you play Rynn, a fearless female warrior right out of the Tarna mold (and if you know what that means good for you)

who rides atop the mighty dragon Arohk. You're mission is to save the worlds spiritual leaders and while you're at it the remnants of mankind. As you can see, the game, which plays out like the ultimate action rpg, is a thing of beauty and let me tell you it's bound to play every bit as good as it looks. D2 hits this fall.

- dave halverson



monster rancher 3

publisher **tecmo** • developer **tecmo** • available **summer**
system **playstation 2**

If you've ever dabbled with the previous Monster Rancher games, then you'll be pretty much familiar with Monster Rancher 3. Choose a monster (or create one), train it, feed it, pit it in battle against other monsters...although now it looks far better than before thanks to remarkable cartoon-like fantasy

visuals, complete with cel-shaded monsters. There's also one very cool new innovation: "Picture Paradise" technology that's compatible with Sony digital cameras, enabling you to put your face onto a mask for your monster to wear. How creepy is that?

- [chris hoffman](#)



wwf raw is war

publisher **thq** • developer **anchor** • available **november**
system **xbox**

The WWF's invasion of next-gen consoles begins this fall with Raw is War. Fantastic animation and the most realistic textures seen in a wrestling game are among the highlights, and the action can now spill into the crowd or the requisite

backstage areas. Some 35 stars such as the Rock, Undertaker, Triple H and Steve Austin will be playable, but don't expect the voices of Jim Ross or Paul Heyman—there's no commentary planned.

- [the heartbreak chris](#)



silent scope 2: dark silhouette

publisher **konami** • developer **konami** • available **september**
system **playstation 2**

Silent Scope 2: Dark Silhouette is shaping up to be another fun, creative shooter from Konami. Like the first, SS2 stands out from other light-gun style games by emphasizing the sniper-scope feature and picking off well-hidden enemies

from afar. A variety of unique levels with a European setting (including a ski slope and a fight in an opera house) make the game stand out from the original, and the promised two-player mode should be especially great.

- [chris hoffman](#)



mad dash racing

publisher **eidos** • developer **crystal dynamics** • available **november**
system **xbox**

One of the premiere games demonstrating the power of the Xbox will be Eidos/Crystal Dynamics' Mad Dash. Sort of a combination of Running Wild and Crash Bandicoot, Mad Dash is a racing game where you use one of nine characters to run, swim and

glide through lengthy levels filled with pits, man-eating plants and other obstacles. Brilliantly colored levels (like a lava world and underground cavern), power-up attacks, hidden areas and four-player action are all prominent.

- [chris hoffman](#)



halo

publisher **microsoft** • developer **bungie** • available **november**
system **xbox**

Let's recap Halo, the promising first-person shooter at the front of the Xbox launch charge: there are aliens to shoot with powerful guns that inflict large amounts of damage. The damage occurs on a distant alien planet, across the inhospitable terrain and inside massive complexes. And what great modern first-person shooter would be complete without vehicles to drive, like the Covenant flyers and Human buggies? Don't count on network play to carry the replay value past the split-screen experience, but do count on a fully dedicated single-player quest that looks awesome. - **brady flechter**

crash bandicoot

publisher **universal** • developer **traveller's tales** • available **fall**
system **playstation 2**

As Crash Bandicoot fans go, I rank among the game's most diligent supporters. The guys who made him are some of the world's best designers and producers, not to mention individuals who practice what they preach. The original, which remains one of the few 3D platformers to warrant comparison to the category's 2D legends like Ghouls 'n' Ghosts and Castlevania, broke new ground for the PS and the genre in general. So how is our Bandicoot fairing in his first jaunt away from the Naughty Dog house? Well, I really wish I had the room to tell you. Find out next month. - **dave halverson**



hunter: the reckoning

publisher **interplay** • developer **high voltage software** • available **q1 2002**
system **xbox**

Based on the popular license from White Wolf Publishing, Hunter: The Reckoning is a hack-and-slash adventure set in a small prison town overrun with vampires and wraiths. To eradicate this undead menace, you assume the role of one of four Hunters, each imbued with their own unique supernatural abilities. Should these inherent gifts prove insufficient, you can also turn to an arsenal of weapons that includes swords, shotguns, and flamethrowers. Though it's not due until early next year, this Xbox exclusive is already looking quite impressive. - **steve thomason**

xenosaga

publisher **namco** • developer **monolith soft** • available **tba**
system **playstation 2**

Monolith Soft has finally disclosed a few tidbits of information regarding their eagerly anticipated RPG, starting with its full title—Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille zur Macht. (You have to love Japanese developers' random use of the German language.) The game does not have any official ties to Xenogears, but it seems to bear a striking resemblance. The soundtrack is being composed by Yasunori Mitsuda, of Chrono Cross fame, and will be performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra. - **steve thomason**





game of the month

gran turismo 3: a-spec
playstation 2

052



046 sonic adventure 2

048 flanagan brothers

050 crazy taxi 2

051 worms world party

>reviews

qr

054 stretch panic

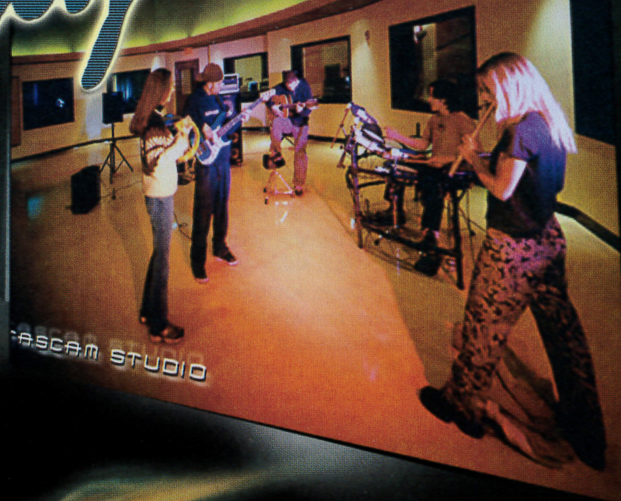
056 twisted metal: black

058 mx 2002

059 final fantasy chronicles

on the next edition ...

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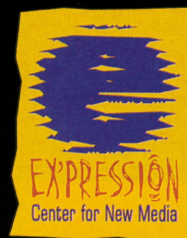
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sonic adventure 2

The last sonic boom on Sega hardware is at hand. See you back in 2D land my little friend ...

During the recent season premiere of *Arliiss* on HBO, one of the athletes inquired, "Want to play my new Sega Dreamcast?" And I thought to myself, "Wow, they don't even know. Ignorance really can be bliss." Stretching beyond mere sequel status into the realm of total overhaul, with *Sonic Adventure 2* creator Yuji Naka has taken what worked in the original game (namely Sonic, Knuckles and E-09) improved on those aspects of the game, and what didn't (nearly everything else) he reinvented. The result is a more diverse, longer, and much deeper trek into the Sonic universe. There's a massive Chao adventure in here too, complete with a Chao school and tons of Chao events, but, personally, I like to kick and throw Chaos until they're dead. My point is that SA2 is a big, beautiful Dreamcast game.

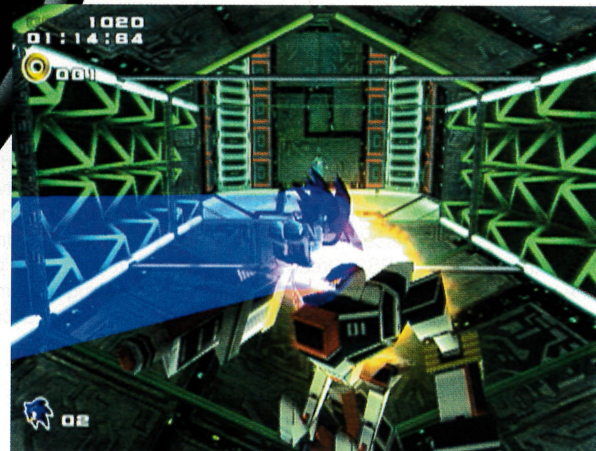
In a brief lay of the land, Robotnik's taken over an abandoned space colony and turned it into his own private Death Star (this one has a pointy nose and funny glasses) and has a massive "laser" aimed squarely at the Earth. Just to let everyone know he means business, he nukes the moon, gutting it like a malt ball for the whole world to see. Meanwhile, from the bowels of a top-secret military installation he's unearthed an old Robotnik family recipe — Shadow the Hedgehog, who seems to have mixed intentions. He's apparently lost his beloved Maria—a human girl, oddly enough—and is seeking revenge anywhere he can get it. Regarded as the government's most powerful weapon (Bush must be in office), Shadow has now pledged his allegiance to Robotnik and is making Sonic's life worse than a cage at the zoo. Although Shadow's black and red, when he steals the chaos emeralds needed to fuel Robotnik's laser, the color-blind authorities mistake him for Sonic. So not only does Sonic have to save the world, he must avoid the authorities while doing it. Meanwhile, Knuckles and Rouge—a peculiar big-breasted chick-bat-Furby-lookin' critter—are locked in mortal combat, and Tails is running interference for the team, breaching security and infiltrating ever closer to Robotnik's secret lair. Once again, there's a lot of story going on for an action game, but Naka has wisely scrapped the cumbersome overworld hub from SA, so now it's nicely integrated (I didn't say it made sense). As long as you choose the Japanese dialogue and English subtitles,

you should be fine. The English voice, er, talent, is way off the mark. Much of the time the actors seem to be reading without any idea what they're saying. Not that it matters; this is Sonic, after all.

In terms of level design and gameplay, Sonic and Shadow's missions are, for the most part, similar to *Sonic Adventure*'s—only now they look even better and are quite a bit more refined. You can see farther, and there's more to explore, including multiple and hidden paths that can be investigated as your character's abilities increase. From vines to bungees to rail slides, Sonic Team has packed a lot of new elements into Sonic's bag. You can still stop to explore certain areas, but should you choose to blaze through the levels, they can fly by like one big-ass combo.

Knuckles' (and similarly, Rouge's) levels have undergone the same type of operation. The premise remains the same: locate pieces of the emerald or





hidden keys. But the levels are vastly larger and more complex, including elements like zero gravity and inverted floating. You can stay in a level anywhere from five minutes to half an hour or more, depending on whether you free all the animals, get all of the rings, and find all of the Chao containers, or simply complete your objective. The biggest changes in game design come with Tails and Robotnik, who both now pilot mechs that use a lock-on mechanism. Tails has some of the best levels in the game. Early on you may not think so, but once he learns to hover, the gameplay reaches new heights (plus it throws out one cool thrust effect), especially once you enter the space colony. The Dreamcast had gifts I wasn't even aware of.

The all-important musical accompaniment, even the hip-hop loops that belch along with Knuckles, can only be billed as good. This being a Sonic game, good ain't that great. It never gets in the vicinity of the legendary

grooves of Sonic, Sonic 2, or the import Sonic CD, but few games do. While I'm on the subject, I may as well explain why SA2's a star and change short of perfection in my eyes: It's because Sonic in 3D is still unable to capture the majesty of Sonic's 2D adventures—a sense of controlled speed and soaring that hasn't been captured since. This is a great game, but one that is actually hard to die in, and for me, it's always about skill as much as visuals; I suppose that's why Jet Grind is now my favorite Sega franchise. But Sonic will always occupy a big space in my heart. He's a great character and this is a great game that just about any skill-level player can and will enjoy. It's a shame it will be Naka's last on Sega hardware, but anticipating what he might do with, say, NIGHTS on PS2, GameCube, or Xbox, makes life all the more sweeter. - Dave Halverson ★★★★★

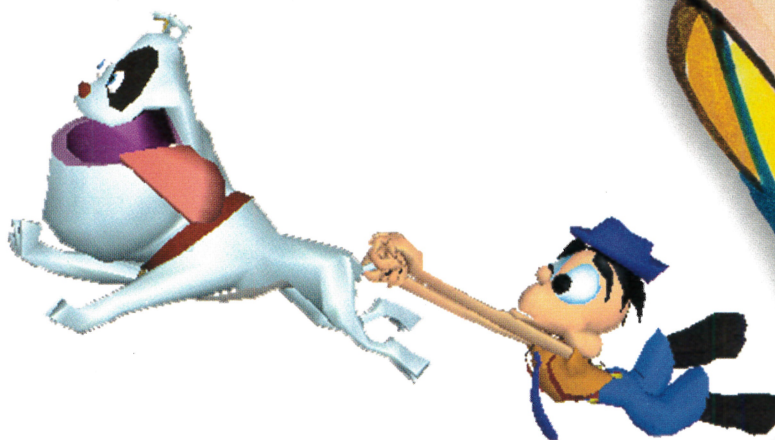
floigan brothers

'Must See TV' takes a ride on the gaming train... Talk about playing with yourself...

Billed as the first episodic video game—the next logical evolution in gaming—Visual Concepts' playable cartoon is finally here. The thought of an ongoing adventure with worthwhile online features and developer support that you can enjoy alone or with others is quite compelling to say the least, and comedy is only the beginning. This genre will hopefully spread into other streams of gaming. So was Floigan Bros. worth the wait? Is it must-see TV? Well, I believe the answer is yes, and yes. But don't pop that cork just yet. Whether or not Floigan Bros. is really a success relies heavily on how long it takes to get episode two onto store shelves, with assets ready to download onto (or would that be into?) a PS2, Dreamcast, or Xbox near you. The whole idea behind episodes is that instead of waiting two years or more for the whole enchilada, you get a taquito

every six months or so. Now that the engine and characters are complete, VC will hopefully follow with a steady stream of 128-bit comic relief at the low, low price of just \$20 a pop, and pack in plenty of online features to tide us over between episodes—like new duds for the boyz, and extra mini games.

In the series debut, VC introduces its two new stars, and by presenting a simple scenario, outlines the brunt of the gameplay. Moigle (that'd be the big dumb one) has a secret, but he won't show Hoigle (the small, smart-ish one)



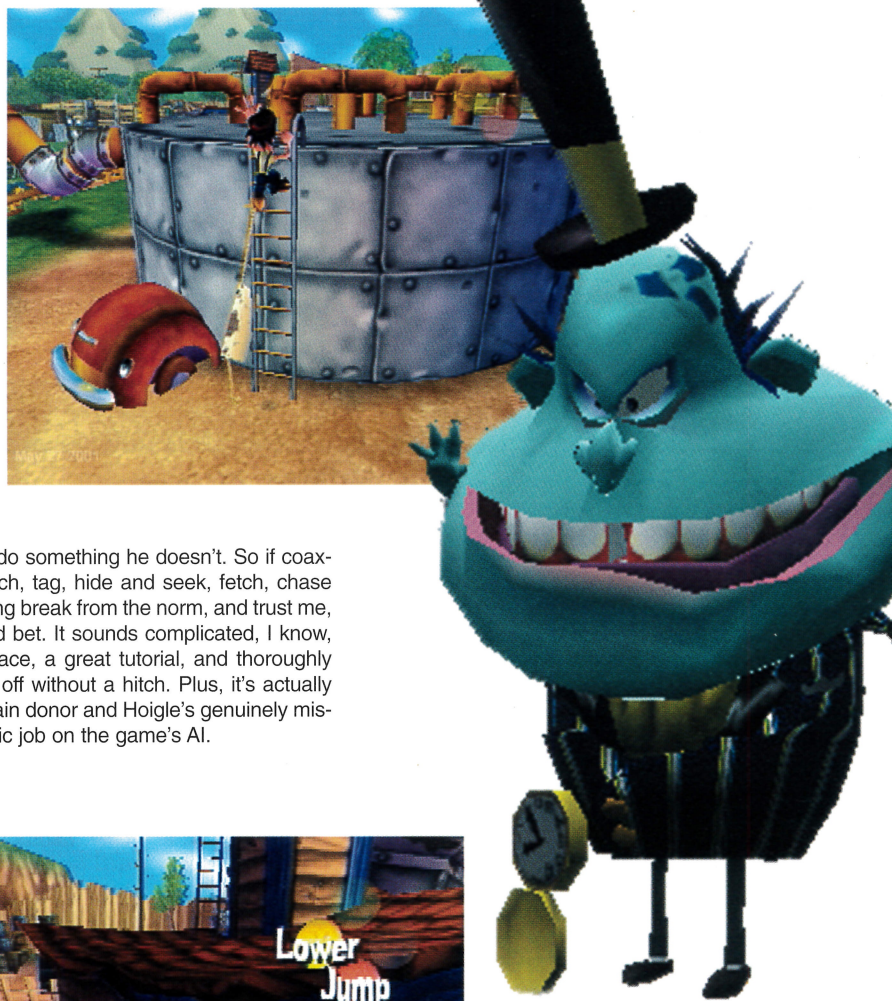
unless he helps him find the seven parts he needs to complete it—and that's it. The cast consists of Hoigle and Moigle Floigan, their dog Spitz, and our villain, the evil and extremely big-headed Baron Malodorous, who's bent on driving the Floigans out of their junkyard home by overrunning them with abusive bomb hurling cats. The game takes place in and around the Floigan Bros. Junkyard, in the adjacent swamp, bluff, cavern, garden, and dog yard. It's a pretty small area, but

you'll use every inch of it playing the game and all of the mini-games within. The gameplay is best described as interactive cause and effect. Everything is based on points...well, almost everything. The game field is littered with crates, each marked by a specific Moigle mood, like anger, happiness, fear or sadness. Say you need a gold key, for instance, but it's too high for Hoigle to reach. By making Moigle angry (punching him in the belly usually does the trick), the anger crate



will unfold and Moigle will come over and mash Hoigle into a ball and then whack him with a bat up to the high point where the key is. Other riddles require that Moigle learn specific tasks, like how to raise Moigle up over his shoulders or overcome his fear of spiders so that he can retrieve the part by the rather large tarantula—and that's where the points come in. It costs 50 points to teach Moigle how to overcome his fear. You earn points by winning games. Easy games like High Five are only worth two points, so you'll need to teach Hoigle better games (which costs more points) like tag, catch, etc., to earn points faster. And one more thing: Moigle won't learn unless he's fed, so you must strategically use the apples sprinkled about the area.

You can also use points to bribe Moigle in case you want to do something he doesn't. So if coaxing, feeding, teaching, and basic backyard hijinx (catch, tag, hide and seek, fetch, chase birds, bash spiders) sounds like a refreshing break from the norm, and trust me, it is, then I believe VC's made a good bet. It sounds complicated, I know, but thanks to a user-friendly interface, a great tutorial, and thoroughly buttoned-up gameplay, it comes off without a hitch. Plus, it's actually pretty funny. Moigle is a major brain donor and Hoigle's genuinely mischievous. VC has done a fantastic job on the game's AI.



Since the game takes place on a rather small chunk of real estate, the visuals are excellent, as is the character design and world's architecture. Together with a twangy, often times backwoods soundtrack, you've practically got O' Brother Where Art Thou the game, and what could be better than that?

- dave halverson ★★★★★



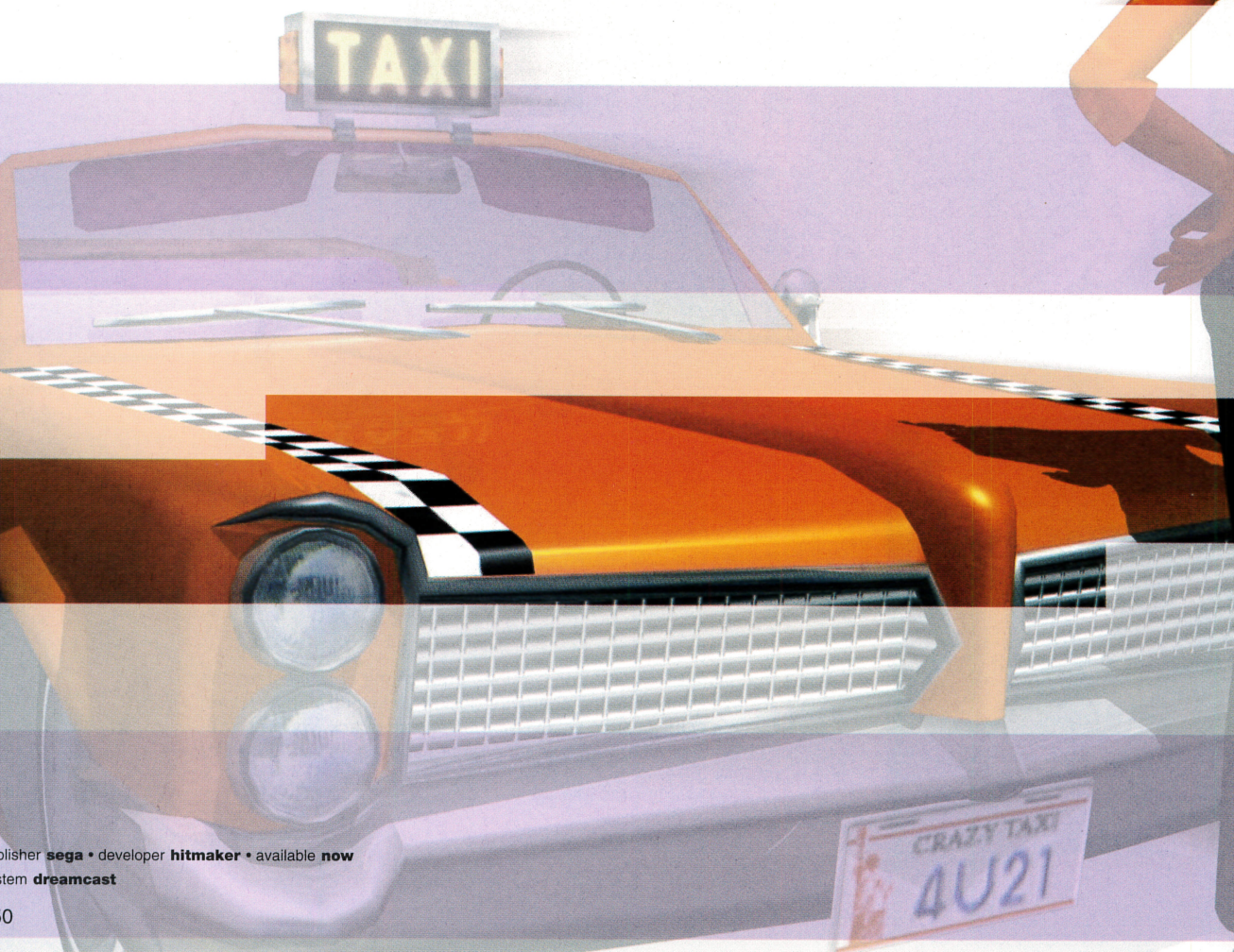
crazy taxi 2

Crazy Taxi arrives in the Big Apple, and while it's as much fun as ever, don't expect anything drastically new.

Crazy Taxi 2 is a very good game, but it fails to significantly advance the franchise for two reasons. First, its flat New York City setting is less exciting than the hilly streets of San Francisco found in the original. Second, little has been added in terms of gameplay. Hitmaker is saving all of the big changes for Crazy Taxi 3, so it might be better to view this as a kind of expansion pack.

The most significant addition to this installment of the series is the Crazy Hop, a new maneuver that allows your cab to leap into the air at the press of a button. This initially makes the game feel a bit too easy, but that'll change when you're faced with dense NYC traffic for the first time. The only other gameplay difference worth mentioning is that you can now pick up groups of two to four customers at once, which multiplies the dollar amount of your tips accordingly. These may sound like major changes, but they don't substantially enhance the overall feel of the game.

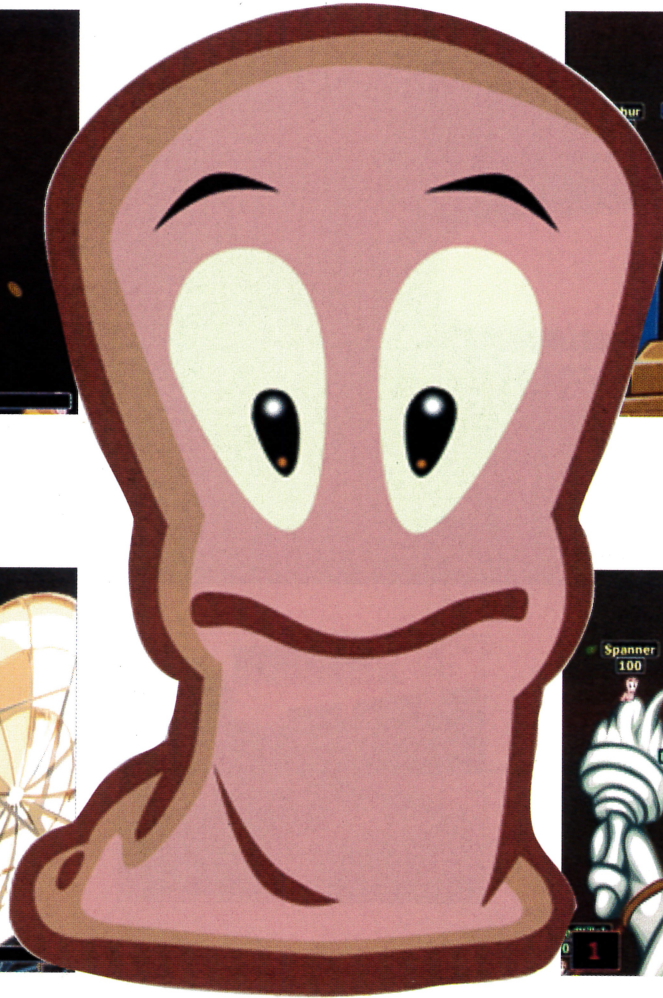
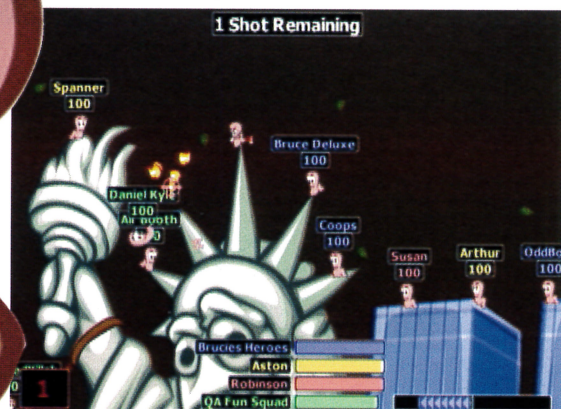
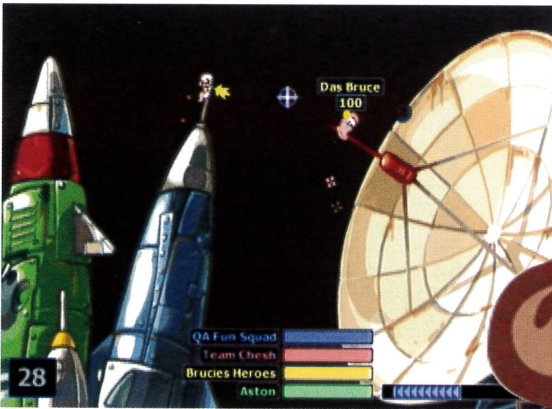
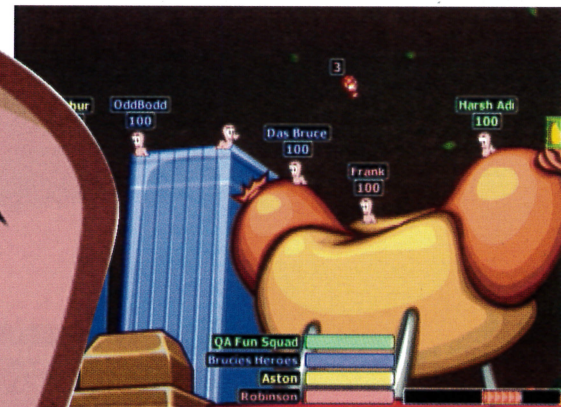
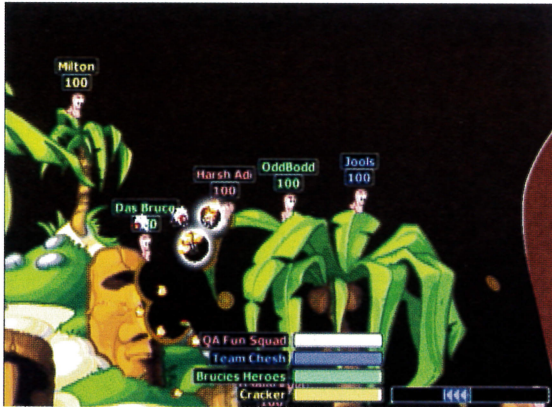
Aside from an improved draw-in distance, Crazy Taxi 2 even looks and sounds almost identical to its predecessor (Offspring is back...ugh). But while this sequel may not be a paragon of renovation, the Crazy Taxi formula remains as fun and addictive as ever. Fans of the original should definitely pick it up, and those who have never experienced Sega's wacky brand of for-hire transportation should at least check out the first game, available under the All-Stars lineup for \$20. - steve thomason ★★★★★



worms world party

The ultimate online party game arrives on Dreamcast

These worms are much more than just fish b



With the advent of SegaNet, social gaming is reaching new heights and Worms World Party represents something of a pinnacle in this regard. A turn-based strategy game for the masses, it features up to four teams of tiny pink annelids battling it out for the pure and simple joy of it. There are no mission objectives, no overarching goals, just fun and addictive multiplayer mayhem both offline and online with absolutely no lag. The result is one of the most enjoyable network experiences this side of Phantasy Star Online, and unlike that title, Worms World Party is the type of game even your non-gaming friends can get into.

Which isn't to say it lacks depth. Instead of focusing on complex resource management and overwhelming statistical analysis, it rewards imaginative tactics and a willingness to experiment with the potpourri of different weapons at your disposal. It takes a little while to get a handle on how everything works, but that's part of the hilarity.

Getting four friends together for a WWP session can lead to more laugh-out-loud moments than any other game. And should you be unable to round up the requisite number of pals, simply jump online where opponents from around the country are just waiting for the opportunity to take you down. My only gripe with the online aspect of the game was the chatting system, but Team 17 wisely added an in-game chat at the last minute. Successfully utilizing an explosive sheep is so much more satisfying when you can verbally rub your opponent's face in it.

As far as visuals go, Worms World Party may not look like much, but its clean, stylized images get the job done. Added graphical complexity is unnecessary in games like this and ChuChu Rocket because the experience is already fully realized without it. Solo players should stay away (the single-player game is exceedingly boring), but I invite everyone else to join the party. - steve thomason ★★★★★



gran turismo 3: a-spec

The perfect driving game? Almost. The best ever made? Certainly.

I'm flying, flat out through the tunnel at Cote d'Azur, Monaco. Brief gaps in the tunnel wall strobe past me on the left as I drift to the right, setting up for the speed sapping corners ahead. I stomp on the brakes, the skinny front tires of my Vauxhall VX220 scrambling for grip as I jink the car left then right through the slow, second-gear chicane. Flooring it on the exit, I wind in opposite lock to get the nose pointed directly at the apex of the next corner. A fellow Vauxhall is already there, its beautifully styled rear exploding into view as if going backwards. A brief shunt and I muscle my way past, accelerating hard through the remainder of the turn, all the while thinking, "This is video-game-driving perfection."

Welcome to the delectable world of Gran Turismo 3, the most anticipated PlayStation 2 game this side of Final Fantasy X. All I can offer is that the seemingly interminable wait has been worth it, as the magicians at Polyphony Digital have obviously poured their hearts and souls into this game.

The quality and beauty evident here is almost impossible to encapsulate, so prodigious are this game's wonders. I suppose it's easiest to start with Gran Turismo 3's graphics, and my knee-jerk vocabulary seems trite to me here; words like *stunning* and *unprecedented* just won't do. No, this game's visual impact is best described in physical terms, as in the way it will make you fall out of your seat. Most of this is to do with the more subtle effects applied throughout, like the way the sun glints off the asphalt, or in the way candy-stripe kerbing can be seen reflected in the cars' meticulously modeled surfaces. And then there is the amazing visual density of the courses. You don't feel like you're racing through a strip of road with some scenery sprinkled around. You feel like you're racing through a complete world, and the sheer visual variety is astounding. And this is just describing the normal sunlit environments. Throw amazing-looking wet and night races into the mix, along with the cracking dirt tracking through the rally races, and you've got the most visually complete racing



experience ever attempted. If it weren't for some very, very minor and very, very rare periphery pop up, I would have no visual complaints whatsoever.

Now before I get to the game's dynamic delights, I have to preface with the caveat that I have been playing Gran Turismo 3 exclusively with Logitech's fantastic force-feedback wheel. Normally, I loathe playing racing games with wheels, as they often prove more trouble than they're worth. But with the brilliant force-feedback coding that Polyphony Digital has applied, racing with the GT Force wheel elevates the experience of Gran Turismo 3 into a truly rarefied realm. In concert with the deeply involving physics model, the wheel actually lets you feel the road surface and various loadings of your car's tires. You'll marvel at the feeling of the steering growing heavy as your car scrubs off speed through a corner, or of it lightening as you countersteer through a slide. Going over kerbs imparts a violent thumping, and racing around rally courses is like an explosion of sensation as the wheel jerks back and forth in your

hands. This is truly the only way to play. With the stock Dual Shock pad, the game is still brilliant, but the physical experience is really no different than previous incarnations of Gran Turismo.

The remainder of Gran Turismo 3's pleasures pretty much go without saying. There's a terrific selection of cars, even if the number is way down over GT2, a wonderful variety of courses, and a staggering amount of racing challenges (a few too many, in fact). The sound is perfect, spine-tingling even, and as any GT purist will tell you, this is a game best enjoyed with the music switched off.

I had impossibly high expectations for this game, and the fact that it has exceeded them speaks to the amount of hard work and sleepless nights that went into the creation of GT3. For what it's worth to the men and women at Polyphony Digital, your efforts have not gone unnoticed. You have just created the best driving game of all time. Not the most original, but the best. - mike hobbs ★★★★★

stretch panic

Treasure, true to form, leaves all convention behind and produces another twisted delight. Pity it's so short, though...

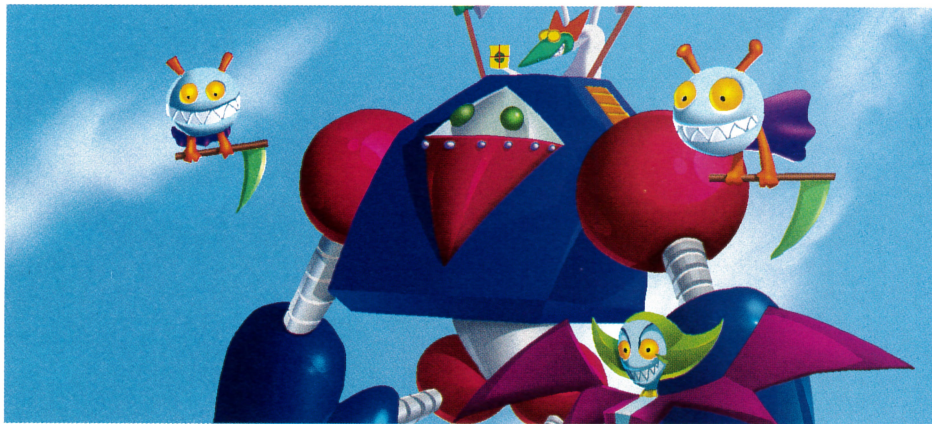


Make no mistake. Treasure's *Stretch Panic* is a side project, a pure, play-mechanics experiment involving boss fighting and not much else. As such, it's not in the same league as *Sin and Punishment* or even *Bangaiō* as a complete gaming experience, but for the duration of its play, *Stretch Panic* is undeniably fun, as much for its addictive play as its ability to make you laugh with its unbridled creativity.

In this supremely twisted effort, you play as Linda, a little girl on a mission to free her twelve vain sisters from the throes of demonic possession. Using a magical, fingered scarf, Linda can pull and tug on anything in the game's environments—enemies, walls, you name it. And from this one bit of pure inspiration, *Stretch Panic* comes to life.

Linda's magical scarf is everything in this game. On her own, Linda can't even jump. To get her to higher plateaus or across large chasms, you extend the scarf, grabbing a piece of the environment and using its plucked tension to loft through the air. This act in itself is fun, because the physics of it are so satisfying and the expression of the scarf's fingers grasping various objects is perfectly done. But where the fun really begins is in how you use the scarf to tackle Linda's possessed sisters, the core of the game.

If nothing else, Treasure is known as masters of the creative boss encounter, and *Stretch Panic* does little to alter this perception. Each of Linda's sisters represent a totally unique challenge, and figuring out how to inflict the most damage is as much fun as it is an exercise in creativity. You may have to nick flying missiles out of the air, grab little enemies and swing them around like a shot put, or lure a giant sand tornado into a pool of water, hardening it so that it can be attacked. Some encounters will leave you completely perplexed, but keeping in the back of your mind that Treasure sprinkles subtle cues about will always lead you to a solution. And once you understand how to defeat a boss, you can get on to the business of exorcising the demons from it by using the special Scarf Bomb Attack. Here, two extra arms spring forth from Linda, and you've got to pull, stretch, and distort the boss till the demon is expelled, returning the sister to her natural form.



"Using a magical, fingered scarf, Linda can pull and tug on anything in the game's environments—enemies, walls, you name it..."

In the same way that *Stretch Panic*'s play is both simple (the idea) and complex (the execution of this idea), so too are the game's graphics. No doubt the environments and models are very simple, but you'll find that some rather impressive effects have been applied throughout, like real-time shadows, real-time reflection mapping, and some dazzling pyrotechnic and blurring effects. And then there is the truly amazing hub of the game, which looks like a 3D pencil-sketch world, an effect I don't think has ever been previously attempted.

Ultimately, *Stretch Panic* succeeds by winning you over with its unique and fun play, even if it feels rather like half a game. The stretching scarf play mechanic would have suited itself brilliantly to a full-fledged platformer, with the game's current boss encounters sprinkled throughout. Then we would have had something truly special. But even so, this Treasure side project has got more gameplay and creativity than most companies' entire library of games. - mike hobbs ★★☆☆☆

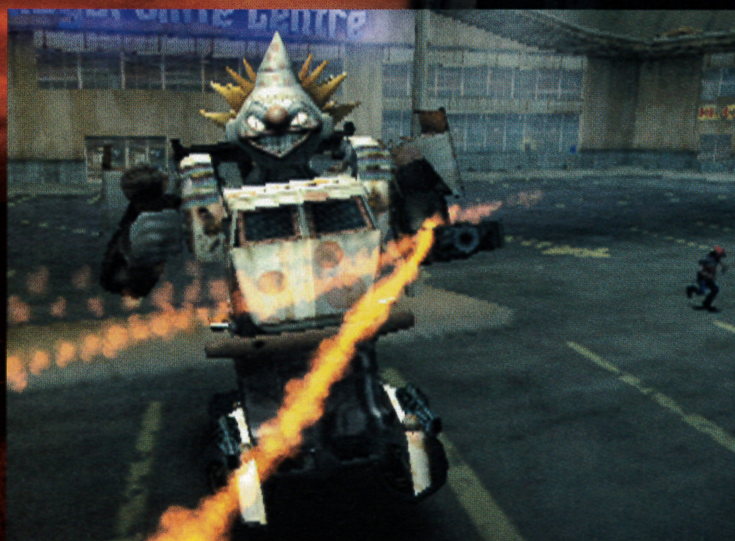


twisted metal: black

You know the phrase "Please don't try this at home?" Well, this is what they were referring too...

The fifth installment of Twisted Metal begins aptly with the first refrain from the Stones' *Paint it Black*—a fitting preface to a bleak game of kill or be killed set amongst a world that looks as if its been populated by video-game editors for the past 50 years. Retro-fitted beater cars run amok, piloted by an array of disturbed individuals with major scores to settle and two things in common: a thirst for vengeance and itchy trigger fingers. They're here to play a game run by a man named Calypso. He's cleaned out the Blackfield Asylum to find his players and promised each the prize of ultimate vengeance if they reign supreme. Among sprawling cityscapes and urban zones bathed in gray and brown, the world is your trailer park and it's time to blow shit up real good.

Designed and implemented by the original TM team, Black gets back to the basics in a big way. After selecting the vehicle of your choice, balancing speed versus armor, you're dropped into massive layered zones with the express purpose of eliminating anything that moves before your own pitiful lives run out. This simple scenario is made compelling by the very nuances these guys cooked up back in '96. In Black, as it was in Twisted Metal, it's all about working the environments in relation to your vehicle's specific attributes. Speedy combatants may find success flying by slower prey, unloading their arsenals and speeding away, while heavily armored cars might claim a space and camp, waiting for somebody stupid enough to take them on and play a little chicken. Once the ammo runs out, it's time to disappear into the many layers of



the game's interior, where you'll find an array of armaments, from heat seekers to massive gas bombs, and then re-emerge ready to bring the pain once again. Good dirty fun never had it so good. Within each area you'll find all manner of eye candy—from working sprint car tracks and office buildings with break-away fronts to bus stops, blinking neon signs and even huge waves crashing over walls. It's almost as much fun studying the levels as it is wrecking them, and as you progress, they become steadily more complex. The weather outlook is fittingly bleak, with ominous dark clouds and pounding acid rain.

In terms of AI, TM Black delivers. Should you single somebody out and go after him or her (I believe there's an "it" in here too) they will retaliate and, if they think they can,

take you down. Speed by and quickly spin a 180 (which the dual analog control makes a snap), and they're likely doing the same. And once it's down to two, watch your ass.

The storylines are things of beauty. There's at least a sitcom or two in here. Seriously, none of this is for the kiddies. The game sports the big M rating for a good reason: these are professional drivers on closed courses! My disturbed inmate of choice, the pale but not stale Raven, declares, "When I started the game, I thought I'd have a problem killing people, but you know, it feels pretty good"; and, "I hope I run across my parents out here, it sure would feel good to run those f^*#*rs over." Now that's what I call a video game! - dave halverson ★★★★★

mx 2002 featuring ricky carmichael

the first motocross game for the playstation 2 sets a new standard for the category



All new and improved for the 2001 PS2 racing season, THQ's prized Motocross franchise featuring Ricky Carmichael has a new developer and a whole new lease on life. Not so much the arcade experience of its PS One lineage, MX 2002 is both visually arresting and a veritable feast of racing technique. The essence of the control revolves around the functionality of the PS2 controller and four main elements: pre-loading the suspension for maximum air; properly timed clutch feathering for boosts out of turns and landing jumps; and powersliding/braking techniques. When, where, and how well you utilize these techniques—relative to the track under you—is the difference between victory and a mouthful of very realistic looking soil. The beauty of professional motocross is the integration of speed and rhythm, and MX 2002 captures this perfectly. The ability to get into the flow of the terrain is the make-or-brake ingredient in this category, and Pacific Coast Power and Light has nailed it.

The game has the complete package, beginning with 22 authentically replicated tracks, ranging from immense outdoor locales to convincingly scaled stadium venues (a feature particularly difficult to achieve). In each you can see the entire landscape all the time without a hint of pop-up or clipping, while up close even the smallest details are attended to. Close up, the bikes have spokes, sprockets, chains, fork guards, detailed engine and exhaust, and even levers, and should you churn some

dirt with a quick clutch burst, the nobbies throw out an impressive mixture of two-stroke exhaust (nothing smells better), chunks of soil, and dust. To get a good look at all of this painstaking programming, an impressive (and save-able) replay system allows you to pan and zoom, fast forward, and freeze the action.

One thing THQ has provided throughout its participation in the sport is the music of the moment, with an emphasis on alt rock. This time around we get the soothing sounds of American Hi-Fi, Injected, Relative Ash, Sum 41, and Saliva (now there's a nice name). You can adjust the volume between the sound effects and music and change the rotation of the tunes accordingly.

My only beef (and it's a cocktail weenie) with MX 2002 is the slightly limited rider animation schemes. While the animation is very good, the riders lack individual style and flash. But this is a minor grievance, especially given the realistic attributes of everything else. As the first of the Carmichael series on PS2, this game not only sets the standard for the category extremely high, but it represents every major sponsor from machines to goggles in the process. MX 2002 provides a deep, addictive excursion through both the 125cc and 250cc seasons of the greatest sport on Earth. No race fan should be without it. - dave halverson ★★★★★

final fantasy chronicles

Two RPGs that defined the genre are back and better than before.

Role playing fans, don't miss this encore performance.



final fantasy iv

RPGs have come a long ways since the days of the Super NES. Little sprites have given way to complex polygon character models, hand-drawn backdrops have been replaced by prerendered or real-time 3D environments, and what were once dramatic little character interactions are now gorgeous FMV cutscenes. Nonetheless, I can't say I'm surprised that Final Fantasy Chronicles—containing the SNES classics Final Fantasy IV and Chrono Trigger—holds its own against the very best that today's games have to offer.

For my money, this game would be worth getting if it were just Chrono Trigger by itself. Representing the pinnacle of the genre when it was released back in 1995, Chrono Trigger was a dream project, combining the talents of some of the best creators in the industry (including Akira Toriyama of Dragon Ball Z fame and composer Yasunori Mitsuda) with the active-time battles of FF and a time-traveling storyline through six periods that goes unrivaled to this day. Gorgeous graphics, excellent writing, over 10 endings, a simple interface and non-random battles that took place right on the level maps were among its pleasures, all of which are just as good now as they were six years ago. Even better is the fact that this version is enhanced with 12 animated cutscenes spread throughout the game (all DBZ fans, take note), and a bonus mode opens up after you beat the game filled with goodies like level maps, enemy descriptions, and a sound test. There is some minor loading and slowdown, but it's nothing that can't be overlooked.

While Chrono Trigger is definitely the highlight of Chronicles, that doesn't mean Final Fantasy IV should be overlooked. Even if you beat it on SNES, it's worth playing over thanks a fantastic, enhanced translation with added story elements. Some facets of FFIV are less than stellar, such as the cumbersome menus and shop screens, but the story really shines. Without giving anything away, let me say there are scenes every bit as touching as Aeris' farewell from FFVII.

If you missed these classics on SNES—heck, even if you didn't—any RPG fan would do well to purchase FF Chronicles. - chris hoffman ★★★★★

publisher **square ea** • developer **square** • available **now**
system **playstation**



magus



crono



ayla

chrono trigger





alone in the dark: the new nightmare

publisher **infogrames** • developer **darkworks** • available **now**
system **playstation**

With the PlayStation 2 in full stride, a PS one game needs to do something truly special to stand out. Alone in the Dark, sadly, does no such thing. It isn't a particularly bad game, but it comes across as a poor man's Resident Evil. The two games are structured quite alike, but AitD's story is less intriguing, its monsters more mundane, and the control scheme, while very similar, is not nearly as precise. Nevertheless, fans of the genre will likely enjoy the game's

many genuine scares and its remarkable use of a simple flashlight. This little tool illuminates the pre-rendered environments unlike anything I've seen before and the effect not only looks cool but also adds immeasurably to the atmosphere. If the rest of the game were as finely crafted, Alone in the Dark could have been a contender. Perhaps the forthcoming Dreamcast version will be better.

- **steve thomason** ★★☆☆



red faction

publisher **thq** • developer **volition** • available **now**
system **playstation 2**

Red Faction is an effectively intense, addictively challenging first-person shooter that treads solidly familiar ground while bringing new, exciting ideas along for the ride. After countless extensions of the Doom formula, this stalwart genre is rarely a breeding ground for fresh gameplay approaches, but Red Faction gets bonus points for, at the very least, attempting something original with what is called "Geo-Mod" technology—fancy talk for "you can destroy everything." Being able to level walls and support structures with a carefully placed rocket blast may be more of a visceral punch than an aggressively effective gameplay technique—it's almost more fun watching the enemy

do the damage than inflicting it yourself—but it does add an essential dimension to the experience.

There's no shortage of exceptional weapons in Red Faction, and mastering the art of death is intuitive and swift; much credit goes to the Red Faction design team for properly attending to sound effects, especially the lovely shriek of the rail gun, which cuts an oblivious enemy down through walls. It may not be the most visually stimulating first-person shooter you've seen, but Red Faction forcefully extends its hold with exceptional level design and a complete, high quality touch to every area of its design. - **brady fiechter**

★★★★★



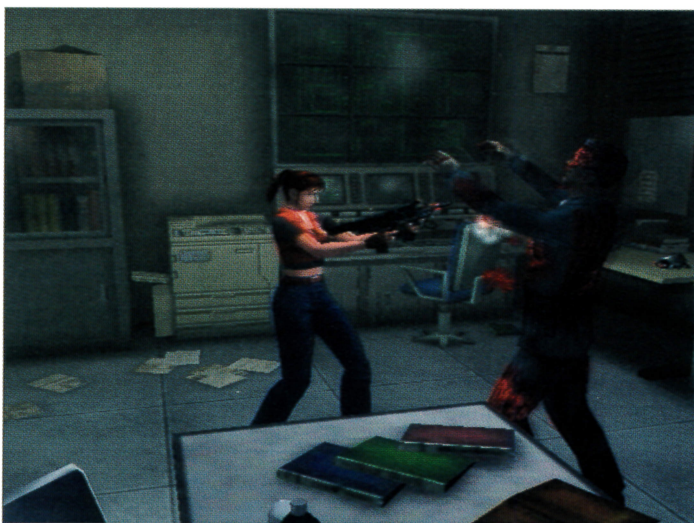
resident evil code: veronica x

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **august**
system **playstation 2**

Zombies and viruses and conspiracies, oh no! Admit it: you love it, and so what if this is the fifth time you've entered the crumbling universe of Resident Evil, because each time it just gets better. The Dreamcast version was great, and this one is a mirror image: involving puzzles, compelling atmosphere, fantastically staged action sequences and a competent story. Shame on Capcom for not adding

a visual polish to the game, but at least they beefed up the story with ten extra minutes of excellent CG; some zealots might appreciate the hairdo change given to Wesker. Satisfying yet old news, Resident Evil Code: Veronica X is the Resident Evil at its best. Just make sure you play it before it's forcefully upstaged by the included Devil May Cry demo.

- brady flechter ★★★★★



escape from monkey island

publisher **lucasarts** • developer **lucasarts** • available **now**
system **playstation 2**

Graphic adventures are a dying breed, so when a new one comes along I tend to take notice. Their cerebral gameplay and more methodical pace can be a welcome break from the action-packed focus of most console games. LucasArts' Monkey Island series is one of the most critically acclaimed franchises in the genre, and Escape from Monkey Island manages to carry on this proud tradition well. The witty dialogue and superb voice acting for which the series is so well known has

been retained, and I derived particular enjoyment from the constant banter between Guybrush and his wife Elaine. The various puzzles that move the game along vary from clever to downright frustrating, but overall they're well designed. My only complaints are that the game is quite glitchy, and graphically, it does absolutely nothing to show off the PlayStation 2's capabilities.

- steve thomason

★★★★★

games mobilized

A new era in handheld gaming arrived with Nintendo's Game Boy Advance, and so have arrived the first GBA reviews. While the GBA will undoubtedly dominate for years to come, the older systems still have some life left - witness the awesome Zelda games on GBC.

klonoa - empire of dreams

publisher namco • **developer** namco • **available** now
system game boy advance • **review**

Klonoa - Empire of Dreams is the best side scroller for the GBA I've played, and it's not going to be an easy one to topple. Set in a magical empire where dreams are forbidden by an emperor with insomnia, Klonoa has defied the hierarchy by dreaming, and now must rid the empire of the four monsters terrorizing the realm to clear his name.

It's one thing to make a garden-variety left-to-right side scroller with pretty graphics, the prerequisite jumping, and a few bosses, but it's a whole other matter creating a deep 2D platformer for the portable

screen—especially one that can hold its own against anything console has to offer. But that's exactly what Namco has done (not surprisingly, everything they touch seems to turn to gold). Klonoa's designers have taken traditional 2D platform fare and chucked it out the window in favor of elaborate 2D mazes, filled with action riddles and exploration. They use wind, counter balancing, crude hydraulics, limited flying, and creatures that serve as boosters, and deploy them with just the right balance to create a world of intriguing visions. The end result is a



sophisticated thinking-man's platformer with the best music on the system, beautiful tri-layered scrolling, subtle shading and some of the coolest bosses you'll ever meet in 2D. Down to the overworld maps, interface, and story construct, this is the GBA side scroller that dreams are made of.

- dave halverson ★★★★★



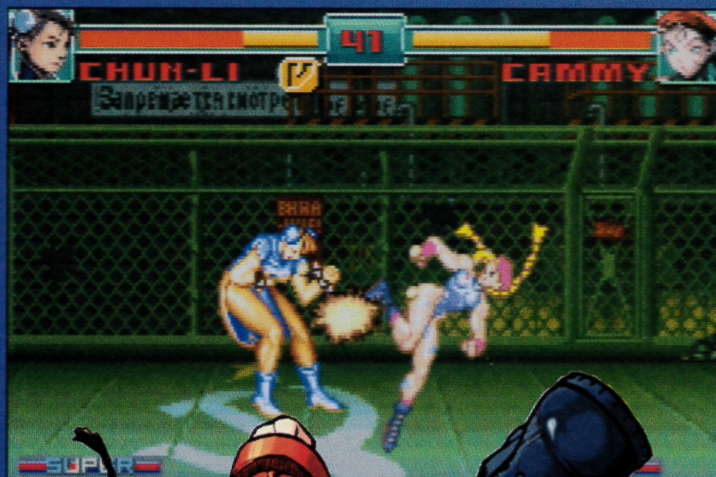
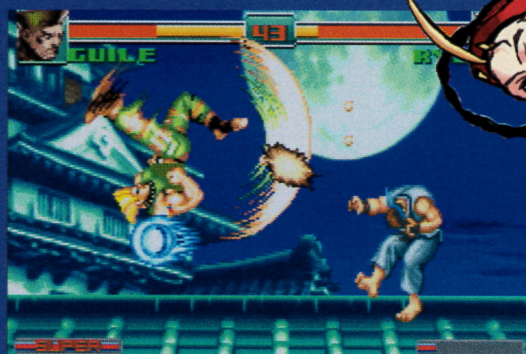
super street fighter II turbo revival

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Suddenly it's 1991 all over again. I'm immersed in 2D gaming bliss, blocking, counter-punching, throwing sonic booms, delivering spinning piledrivers, incinerating opponents with Yoga Flames. But what was only possible in the arcades 10 years ago can now be done anywhere with the GBA version of Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival. As much as I love my old Neo Geo Pocket, SF2 on GBA blows away anything on the former portable fighting dream machine - not so surprising when you consider that Street Fighter is and probably always will be the standard-bearer of 2D fighting. While all the moves and characters of the arcade Super SF2 Turbo have been retained, many adjustments have been made to make the experience at least somewhat new. Some backgrounds are totally redone, some characters have altered moves (Ken plays more like he does in Alpha), the bonus stages have been put back in, there's an option for the super

bar to carry over between rounds, plus there are hidden survival modes. The gorgeous graphics are beyond arcade perfect, with beautiful new character portraits to go with the already excellent sprites and backgrounds. Sure, it doesn't control arcade-perfect thanks to the GBA's four buttons, but it comes as close as possible. This is the best handheld fighting game ever.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



mario kart super circuit

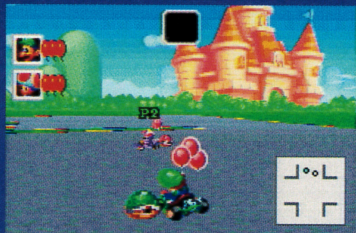
publisher **nintendo** • developer **intelligent systems** • available **august**
system **game boy advance** • review

In another seemingly effortless display of Nintendo quality, Mario Kart Super Circuit slots home on Game Boy Advance with everything I could have hoped for in a portable version. There's a staggering 40 tracks (twenty new and twenty from the first game), wonderful little graphics that easily eclipse the SNES original, and all of the classic game play modes available for solo or up to four player link play. The game even supports a one-cartridge four player mode, limited to four tracks and Yoshi as the default driver.

So you see, all the big pieces are in place, which leaves the detailing and minor enhancements. The all important powersliding system has been nicely tweaked. It's a bit simpler than the one found in Mario Kart 64, but more satisfying than

the one in the original. In Mario Kart Super Circuit, a well-held slide will get you a little extra boost as you exit the corner. Also, it is now possible with perfect driving to actually outrun a homing red turtle shell, adding yet another layer of excitement to the classic formula. And in answer to a rampant criticism of the 64 version, this one isn't quite so mercilessly cheap. Now, it's just amusingly cheap.

- mike hobbs ★★★★★



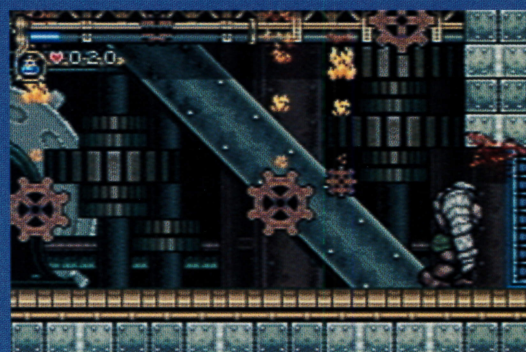
castlevania: circle of the moon

publisher **konami** • developer **kce kobe** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Castlevania: Circle of the Moon is the true successor to Konami's legacy of vampire slaying. It almost seems impossible that the folks at KCE Kobe were able to take all the most important elements from the PlayStation's Castlevania: Symphony of the Night and blend them flawlessly into an all-new handheld adventure, but it's all here: a massive castle to explore, numerous ability-enhancing power-ups, and an incredible Gothic look and feel. One of Circle of the Moon's simple but wondrous pleasures is finding new abilities and thus opening up amazing new areas. As expected, each new section is filled with truly frightening beasts and the awesome, screen-filling bosses that the series is known for - and these foes are much more difficult than in Symphony of the Night, making it a much lengthier, more satisfying title. The new DSS system (where you

collect cards from enemies to create a total of 100 power-up abilities) makes the game stand out from its predecessors, and added to the detailed graphics, amazing symphonic music (Konami obviously knows more about the GBA sound than any other company) and high challenge level, Castlevania is one of the must-have GBA titles.

- chris hoffman



Question: How can Nintendo get away with launching the Game Boy Advance with a Super Mario Advance, a game that is little more than a rehash of titles we played more than a decade ago? Answer: By making sure that this rehash is not only of some of the finest games ever played on the NES, but also that they are superior to the originals in nearly every way. I'll assume that you've played these games in one form or another over the years and dispense with explanations of why the games are great; instead I'll focus on why they're worth owning all over again. 1) Thanks to the GBA's 32 bits of power, both games have been given a tremendous boost in

both the graphics and sound department. 2) Mario Bros. has been enhanced with a four-player battle mode and co-op play. 3) SMB2 has been given numerous subtle but important tweaks throughout, including extra hidden power-up mushrooms in every level, 100 collectible coins scattered throughout the game, new enemy and item placement, a more appropriate difficulty (you now start each life with only one heart), and a second challenge mode after you beat the game. 4) It's Mario, darn it. I suppose you can get a new Nintendo system without a Mario game, but why would you want to?

- chris hoffman

★★★★★

super mario advance

publisher **nintendo** • developer **intelligent systems** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



jurassic park III: dna factor

publisher **konami** • developer **honolulu studio** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



Like most movie-licensed games, Jurassic Park III: DNA Factor falls into the trap of relying more on the movie name than it does on solid, enjoyable gameplay. Despite some innovation, the combining of contrasting styles of gameplay just doesn't work. Collecting dozens of little, colored DNA bits in every level is in stark contrast to the premise of avoiding all the dino, and it makes for tedious gameplay. The innova-

tion of adding puzzle stages after each level is kind of cool, but accidentally screwing up a puzzle and being forced to replay the preceding action stage is really frustrating. Likewise, having two planes for the action to take place on is awkward at best (and it makes it look like characters in the distant plane are flying). Hopefully the movie will be better than the game.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★

f-zero advance

publisher **nintendo** • developer **nintendo** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Easily one of the most impressive of the GBA's healthy launch library, F-Zero Maximum Velocity eclipses its SNES big brother graphically and matches it for gameplay, making it one of the more exciting portable racing games I've played.

Even on the GBA's little screen, F-Zero MV manages to capture the speed and intensity that has become the calling card of the series. This is quite an achievement, as are the game's graphics. Multiple layers of Mode 7 give the all-new courses a

clever visual depth that was not to be found on the SNES original, and the little sprite-based ships look closer to the polygonal N64 ones than might be expected.

Naturally, link-up play is perfect and a lot of fun, with the supremely short courses making for fast and furious two-player fun. And while there is a one-cartridge link-up versus mode, it is limited in that you get one track and one selection of vehicles. Still, it's better than nothing.

- mine hobbs ★★★★★



konami crazy racers

publisher **konami** • developer **koe kobe** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Take the fun of a solid kart racer and mix in the richness of the Konami universe and you get Konami Crazy Racers. Though not exactly bursting at the seams with technique - there's no power-slide system - Crazy Racers shines with excellent controls, great visuals, and some really impressive audio. They even kept the singing from the Japanese version! Sixteen courses plus battle modes will keep players occupied for a while, but it's the coolness of playing as the different

Konami characters and racing through levels based on Gradius, Metal Gear (complete with land mines), and more that makes this game especially appealing. The multiplayer modes are kind of lacking (there's no music in the races), but single-player is quite worthwhile. For a deeper fantasy racing experience, you're better off with F-Zero or Mario Kart, but for sheer fun Crazy Racers is great.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



earthworm jim

publisher **majesco** • developer **pipe dream** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



I'm as let down as the next guy that EWJ on the 32-bit Advance isn't near the game it was on the 16 bit SNES, but I suppose somewhere in the deep recesses of my mind I'm glad to see Jim slither out of his hole at all. After his underappreciated jaunt on the N64, the once superstar worm has slipped into obscurity, working at the local bait 'n' tackle, waiting for his next gig, which happens to be a mediocre translation onto the hottest handheld the world has ever seen. Not the worst fate, but things could have been better. What we have here is a somewhat watered-down version of the SNES game (plus an added level from the

superior Sega game). The problem is that Shiny originally scripted the game's rhythm around a highly animated character, so the control was literally instantaneous in every respect. Take away half the animation or thereabouts and you lose half of the responsiveness. Plus, the backgrounds aren't as clean, the music's not as good and the 3D segues are all out of sync. But all that said, somehow I think EWJ remains a viable side scroller for the unit. But only if you never played the original. The game was just that good. If you have, then savor the memory and go buy Klonoa or Rayman.

- dave halverson ★★★★★

fire pro wrestling

publisher **bam** • developer **spike** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



Anyone who complains about Fire Pro Wrestling's game system simply hasn't taken the half hour or so to learn to use its timing-based controls. Those who do overcome that minor learning curve will be rewarded by the deepest wrestling game ever found on a handheld system, complete with over 150 characters, hundreds of moves, over a dozen modes and an overwhelmingly thor-

ough custom character mode. Unfortunately, there's no career mode, and the WWF vs. WCW appeal of the import version has been lost due to redesigned characters (despite what BAM said about not changing the U.S. version), but it's still the best portable wrestling game out there.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★

chuchu rocket!

publisher **sega** • developer **sonic team** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Look at this. Sonic Team on Game Boy Advance. Sure, this may not be the game that most were clamoring for, but it will do.

What's important here however is how the game plays on Game Boy Advance. Well, in theory, it's very good (it would have been difficult for Sonic Team to mess it up), but the limited buttons of the system makes

the game a little trickier than the DC original. You have to press A twice, for instance, to place a right arrow. This may not sound like much of a problem, but believe me, in the heat of a hectic ChuChu game, this can become a bit of a pain.

- mike hobbs ★★★★★



tony hawk's pro skater 2

publisher **activision** • developer **vicarious visions** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

Arguably the best game out for the system thus far, Tony Hawk 2 presents the console game's familiar environments (schools, skate parks, and real world skate spots) in stunning top down fashion, but the real cheddar here are the 13 pro skaters, which are all rendered to perfection looking like a quiver of stylin' Gumbys. The game is surprisingly intuitive to pick up once you wrap your brain around the isometric

graphics. Ramps and pipes and rails are easy to judge towards the top of the screen while stuff down below requires some good judgment to hit - especially some of the more demanding requirement in each area. The music is kickin', the control is perfect and the replay value is off the charts. This series shows no signs of ever scoring anything below an A.

- dave halverson ★★★★★



super dodgeball advance

publisher **atlus** • developer **million** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



Super Dodgeball is one of those games that's so simple in concept yet so fun to play that you can't help but love it. "Dodge" really isn't the operative word in the title, as the gameplay really boils down to selecting your favorite team and then clobbering the opponents with the ball until you win. Each character has his own unique special move, and

the graphics and sound are quite good, and there's even a little technique involved - though you'll have it all mastered in no time after a few rounds on the court. Unfortunately, this means gameplay against the CPU can get stale after a bit, so you might want to convince a friend to pick it up for link play.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★

iridion 3d

publisher majesco • **developer** pipe dream • **available** now
system game boy advance • **review**



I was literally speechless the first time I played Iridion 3D. I had never in my life seen such amazing 3D graphics on a handheld system. Using what looks like a combination of polygons and sprites, Iridion is like playing a shrunk version of Galaxy Force. Flying through amazing looking tunnels and over clouds and water (complete with time of day changes), Iridion left me giddy with hopes of what Star Fox might look like.

Sadly, these good looks are about all the game has to offer, as the gameplay is a little flat and uninteresting. You fly along at a fixed pace shooting everything that comes towards you, collecting basic power-

ups along the way. Nothing really wrong with that, but the execution isn't so great. One of the problems is that the collision is a little bit wonky, making it difficult to avoid shots and enemies, and the nature of the game's perspective makes it hard to judge an enemy's distance. And frustratingly, there is no continue system, so every time you use up your lives, you've got to go back to the title screen and enter a password. I thought these days were behind us.

Iridion looks brilliant, and for this reason alone I am recommending it. The play is average, make no mistake, but it's tolerable for the visual thrill.

- mike hobbs ★★☆☆☆

rayman advance

publisher ubi soft • **developer** digital eclipse • **available** now
system game boy advance • **review**

Games as beautiful as Rayman Advance really shouldn't be allowed to exist on a portable system, yet here it is on GBA in all its glory. Remarkably, the vibrant, colorful worlds, brimming with rich animation details and multiple levels of parallax found in the home console versions, have been recreated virtually perfectly, making Rayman an ideal title to pick up to showcase the 2D power

of the GBA. Of course, it ain't all looks. If you've played the other versions, you know that Rayman is filled with techniques and insane platforming action, and this port includes it all - even the high challenge level. The only thing I could have asked for is a more convenient save feature.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



pitfall: the mayan adventure

publisher majesco • **developer** pipe dream • **available** now
system game boy advance • **review**

Contrary to popular opinion I consider Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure a quality side scroller for the small screen. It's certainly a much better port than its Majesco brethren Earth Worm Jim. One of the main gripes swirling about is how dark the games color schemes make it difficult to see well camouflaged enemies. To this I say-get a light! Preferably a flip-up Pelican light. Pitfall's biggest problem, and the only reason it's difficult to recom-

mend, is the absence of a password feature. Having to play through each level over as you progress in the game, especially in this day and age, is unforgivable. Pitfall is also, curiously, without music. If you're in possession of a rechargeable battery pack however, and are looking for a solid side scroller Pitfall's definitely worth your attention. It's loaded with quality animation, and fairly intriguing gameplay.

- dave halverson ★★★★★



pinobee: wings of adventure

publisher activision • **developer** artoon • **available** now
system game boy advance • **review**



Pinobee, Artoon's simplistic yet engaging platformer, sends you through 21 levels of exploratory gameplay as a cute little robotic bee who needs to find his grandpa who invented him, but then was kidnapped just before installing his heart. Kind of Pinocchio and the Wizard of Oz all rolled into one. You begin the game with a simple jump/dash maneuver, and as you explore the levels, fairies will award you added dash ability so that you can attain more height, then go back and find what you couldn't before to reveal new endings and the big bonus—should you achieve bumble bee oneness. There's lots to do and

find in each beautiful area of Pinobee, but doing so just isn't very fun. It's platforming by the numbers at best, and the enemy characters (drones awaiting death by bouncing) couldn't be any more boring. It's all very straightforward, ridiculously easy, but drop-dead gorgeous. To the degree the visuals deliver, however, the music falls short. This is a stupendous game for the small children—it's written for beginner gamers—but if you're looking for a challenge, you're better off with the nonsensical dream creature, the plumber, or the limbless wonder.

- dave halverson ★★★★★

army men: advance

publisher **3do** • developer **dc studios** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review



I almost feel bad complaining about how mediocre Army Men: Advance is - since it seems to happen with just about every 3DO release - but sadly, it's the truth. This adventure game moves at a sluggish pace, as this cookie-cutter game hardly focuses on the "Army" part of Army Men and is more about running around, collecting keys, opening doors, and lethargically

busting up inanimate objects to complete mission objectives. In some ways, the game feels like Mortal Kombat: Special Forces on PS1. The engine is decent (thank goodness for strafing and the bit of variety, like driving a tank), but since the levels and objectives aren't interesting, it's hardly a keeper.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★

ready 2 rumble boxing round 2

publisher **midway** • developer **midway** • available **now**
system **game boy advance** • review

There were two things that really made Ready 2 Rumble stand out on consoles: the awesome facial animations and the fun head-to-head gameplay. Unfortunately, both are missing from the GBA version of this title. The game animates beautifully and sounds extremely impressive, but without the bells and whistles, a lot of the appeal is lost. Even more

severe are some schizophrenic controls (there are times when moves just don't want to come out) and limited gameplay that makes the bouts lack any sort of excitement. Even the career mode and hidden characters don't spice things up much. It's not horrible but there are plenty of other better GBA titles.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



final fantasy II

publisher **squaresoft** • developer **squaresoft** • available **now (japan)**
system **wonder swan color** • review

We still don't know for sure if the WonderSwan Color will ever be released in the United States or not, but with games like Final Fantasy II, you've got ask - why the hell not?! Like Final Fantasy I, FFII on WonderSwan is a gorgeous upgrade of the original Famicom classic, complete with new scenarios, a better interface, and colorful, detailed graphics comparable to Final

Fantasy VI on SNES. A unique leveling-up system made its appearance in this installment (think SaGa Frontier), as did the ability to learn keywords from NPCs and then converse with others. Now that this classic has been updated for the new millennium, it's easily one of the best handheld RPGs ever.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



return of the ninja

publisher **natsume** • developer **natsume** • available **now**
system **game boy color** • review



Theoretically, there's nothing wrong with making a stealth-based, exploration-heavy, 2D ninja game. Learning all the ninja powers, like walking on water, climbing on walls, burrowing through earth, is actually pretty cool. Unfortunately, it seems that beyond that concept, the programmers just wanted to make Return of the Ninja as annoying as possible. The levels promote exploration, but the game punishes you for doing so with blind hits and cheap enemies that seem to pop out

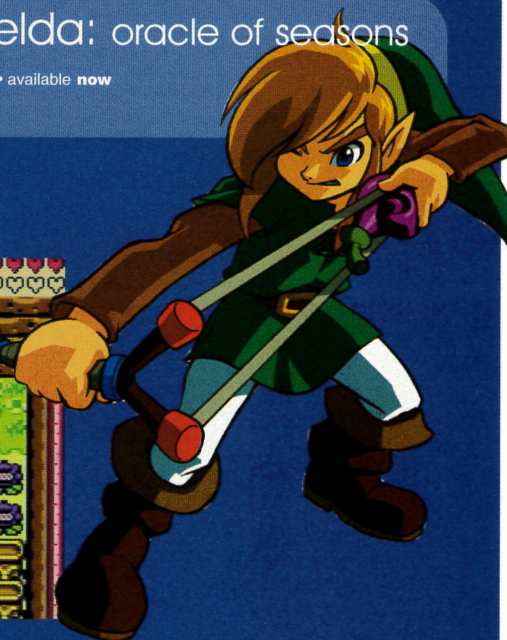
of no-where as you're jumping. This becomes incredibly frustrating when combined with a miniscule life bar and the fact that you lose all your acquired powers every time you continue - something that happens a lot thanks to the trial-and-error gameplay - unless you want to keep entering the obscenely long password over and over. I'd recommend digging up an old copy of Ninja Gaiden Shadow instead.

- chris hoffman ★★★★★



the legend of zelda: oracle of seasons

publisher **nintendo** • developer **capcom** • available **now**
system **game boy color** • review

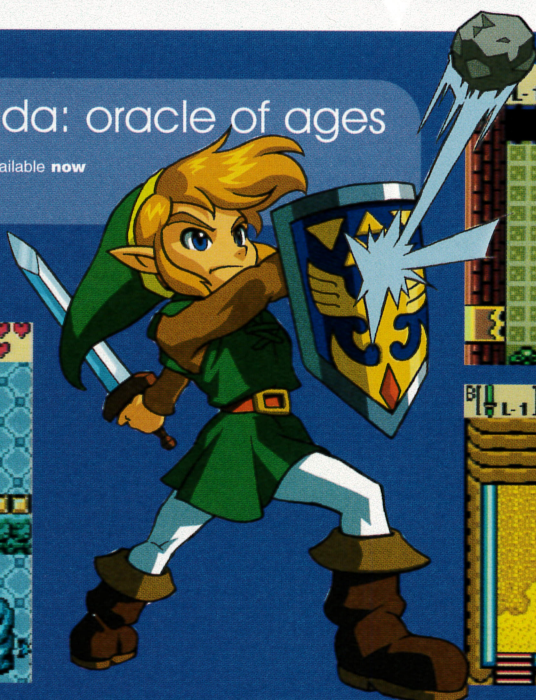


What is it that has made the Zelda series so great? The sword-swinging combat? The clever puzzles? The beautiful graphics? The lush worlds and memorable characters? Or maybe all those wonderful toys that Link obtains? It's the perfect balance of all those elements that has made this series so beloved, and thankfully, every one of them has made it into The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons. For the most part, Oracle of Seasons is classic 2-D Zelda. As usual, you have a vast overworld to explore, filled with familiar enemies and obstacles, and there are eight main dungeons, each containing a new item, but the designs

and challenges are so compelling that it always feels fresh and moves you to see what comes next. Additionally, Link also obtains the Rod of Seasons this time out, which adds a whole new dynamic to the gameplay. Link can change the landscape by changing the seasons, effectively creating four variants of the game world and allowing for some delicious puzzles. The only complaint is that you'll be going to the sub-screen a lot to switch items thanks to the GBC's two-button configuration, but it's a small price to pay for such a magnificently designed gaming experience. - **chris hoffman** ★★★★★

the legend of zelda: oracle of ages

publisher **nintendo** • developer **capcom** • available **now**
system **game boy color** • review

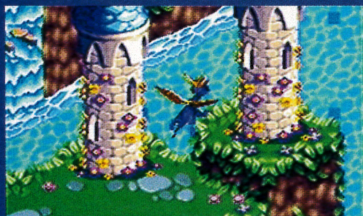


Just like Oracle of Seasons, The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages is portable gaming at its finest. Though set in a completely different world with all-new dungeons and challenges, Ages boasts the same masterful design and delicate balance of combat and puzzles. Of course, Ages also features two time periods which Link must travel between to complete his quest, thanks to the Harp of Ages which Link obtains early in the game. Surprisingly, the time-warping element isn't quite as cool as the season-shifting power in Seasons (it's been done before), but don't make the mistake of thinking that these are just Zelda Red and

Zelda Blue - these are two awesome, unique, full-length adventures that are both worth getting. Which brings me to one of the finer points of the Oracle games - the password link system. The password system - which starts after you beat one of the games - allows you to not only obtain the best items in the game, but it also reveals new story elements, allows you to battle the true final boss, and adds significant replay. You can even transfer the ability-enhancing rings that Link finds from one game to the other via password. The only problem is deciding which one to play first. - **chris hoffman** ★★★★★

spyro: season of ice

publisher **universal interactive** • developer **digital eclipse** • available **november**
system **game boy advance** • preview



A cursed wizard has frozen the Fairylands, and it's up to Spyro to bring back spring and rescue the frozen fairies in Spyro's first handheld outing, *Spyro: Season of Ice*. One E3 showgoer actually thought this GBA game was a hand-drawn PS game, but given how vivid and beautiful the hand-drawn art looks, it's forgivable. Aside from boasting such lush visu-

als, Spyro is also retaining the variety it was known for on PS. Isometric adventuring makes up most of the game's 30 stages, but 3D flying levels are also featured, and now Spyro has new moves like Electric Breath, Bubble Breath and Water Spit. Favorite Spyro characters, like Zoe, Hunter and Sparx also return.

- chris hoffman

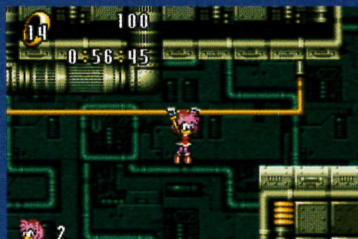
sonic advance

publisher **sega** • developer **sega** • available **november**
system **game boy advance** • preview

Sadly, we still haven't got to play Sonic on GBA yet, but at least Sega

is revealing more of the game to us. Borrowing from *Sonic Adventure*, there will be multiple playable characters, including Tails, Knuckles and Amy, and Sonic will be able to grind on rails just like in the most recent DC release. Typical Sonic locales like factories and rolling green hills provide the backdrop for the action, and expect insane loops and blistering speed.

- chris hoffman



final fight one

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **summer**
system **game boy advance** • preview

The game that defined the side-scrolling brawler genre is back, and all the action of the arcade game has made it perfectly into the GBA version. That means all the levels, all the weapons and all the characters (Guy, Cody and Haggar) are included. The GBA's sprite-pushing power is put to the test as up to six enemies attack at once, and best of all, two-player link mode is included, so you can play *Final Fight* like it was meant to be played. The import version rocks, but we won't deliver an official

review until we see if any changes were made to the U.S. version.

- chris hoffman



jurassic park III: park builder

publisher **konami** • developer **konami** • available **summer**
system **game boy advance** • preview



Have you ever wanted to run your own park full of ravenous, human-eating dinosaurs? Now you can with *Jurassic Park III: Park Builder*. Essentially a Theme Park clone with dinosaurs as the attractions, *Park Builder* lets you construct the park from scratch, placing roads, foliage, souvenir shops, restaurants and, of course, dinosaur pens anywhere

you want on the island. By sending out excavation teams you can find the DNA of new dinosaurs, allowing for 140 types of dinos to populate the park as you see fit. Of course, there's always that nagging problem of what happens when the pens don't hold up...

- chris hoffman

handheld peripherals



Sure, you could go through pair after pair of double-A batteries, but why bother when there are so many alternatives? Almost every peripheral we tried out was decent, from Nintendo's official AC adaptor to Interact's PowerPak to Mad Catz' Battery Pak. Our favorites, though, were Pelican's petite Power Grip (which doubles

as a belt clip) and the Mad Catz Power Station, which includes two rechargeable battery paks and a charging station that can re-energize the battery paks on their own or while they're still in the GBA. Mad Catz' Car Adaptor and Interact's Plug 'N' Play AdaptorPak also work well if you want to play while riding in the car.



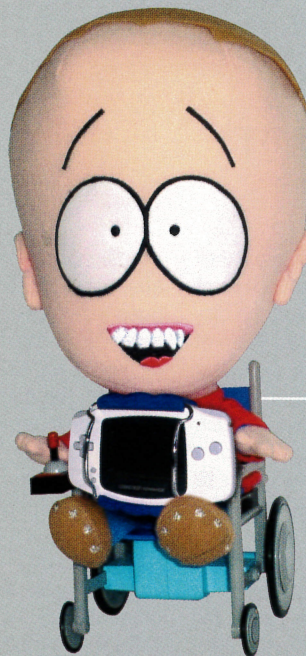
Unless you've got really good overhead lighting, chances are you'll want a light attachment for the GBA. When testing out the various light sources, we used the "Castlevania test," where one of our brave editors went into a pitch-black room and tried to play Castlevania: Circle of the Moon using only GBA accessory light sources. The results? Pelican's

awesome Light Shield Advance, with its flip-top design, adjustable brightness and ability to run off the GBA's batteries, was our favorite pick, but Interact's Glow Guard (which is very similar except for the lack of a brightness control) ranks second. Most other lights were positioned over the screen, resulting in reflections that interfere with the play field.



With the GBA's one-pak-needed multiplayer gameplay, you'd definitely do well to pick up a link cable for games like Mario, F-Zero, Chu Chu Rocket and so many others. Going with the official Nintendo brand is probably the safest bet, but

Pelican's Multi-Player Link and the no-frills Multi-Link from Mad Catz also worked fine. However, you'll want to avoid Mad Catz Ultra Link, since the sample of this GBA/GBC cable that we got was incompatible with our systems.



Just about every other wacky peripheral you can think of is out there for GBA, from snap-on face masks that add joysticks to the GBA to rubber shells that defend the system from projectile blows (or something like that). Most of these items tend to interfere with the buttons and feel cheap, but the exception is Mad Catz' Roll Cage. Its simple design doesn't interfere with play and protects it from damage, but really, there's little chance you'll need it unless you're lending to someone who's "mentally challenged."

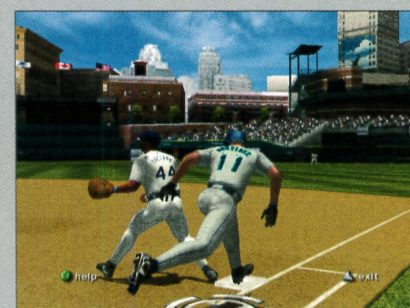
world series baseball 2k2

publisher sega • **developer** visual concepts • **available** summer 2001
system dreamcast • **preview**

Last year's World Series Baseball was a major disappointment, but Sega is looking to make amends this season by handing the franchise over to the talented folks at Visual Concepts. To set your mind at ease right off the bat, they've added complete fielding control so that you won't feel like a spectator this time around. Additional enhancements are also being implemented to make the game more sim-like than its predecessor.

As you can see from these screens, WSB 2K2 looks incredible, proving that Dreamcast can still compete, particularly in the sports arena. And what Sega Sports title would be complete without online play? This summer you can enjoy America's pastime with fellow baseball fans from all across the country. We'll have more on this and the rest of Sega's 2K2 line-up in the coming months.

- **steve thomason**



cool boarders 2001

publisher scea • **developer** idol minds • **available** now
system playstation 2 • **review**

What a difference a month makes! While it still doesn't measure up to SSX, the finished version of Cool Boarders 2001 is vastly improved over the dismal preview build we covered last issue. All hints of slowdown have been removed, the grinding mechanic has received some much-needed tweaking, and the game as a whole just plays much smoother. I'm also impressed by the size and complexity of the courses, which offer so much to see and do that you'll likely never traverse them the same way twice.

But despite this surprising turnaround, the game still has its share of problems. Graphically, it's bland and uninspiring, utilizing the PS2's power for technical proficiency (there are no seams and minimal draw-in), but little else. There are also some

occasional, distracting sound-effect glitches, and I absolutely abhor the soundtrack, although I suppose that's more a matter of taste. Most egregious, however, is that the controls can be a bit sluggish at times, especially when performing tricks. This prevents the game from achieving that tight, sharp feeling of a Tony Hawk's Pro Skater or the aforementioned SSX.

Still, CB 2001 is above average, and as far as Cool Boarders games go, that makes it the cream of the crop. It has some nice variety, with everything from straight downhill races to half pipes to special challenge events, and the selection of pro riders is unparalleled. Worth a look for fans of the sport while they await SSX Tricky.

- **steve thomason** ★★☆☆



gr sports

rossing · baseball · football · basketball · skateboarding · boxing · golf · snowboarding · track and field · tennis ·

nba street

publisher ea sports • **developer** nufx • **available now**
system playstation 2 • **review**



The EA Sports Big label is off to an incredible start. Their premiere outing, SSX, was probably the PS2's best launch title, and now NBA Street is set to deliver that same kind of fast-paced, arcade-style excitement on the basketball court.

The idea behind it is simple: three-on-three streetball, first team to 21 wins. But the game's greatness stems from its masterful execution of this basic premise. Nearly every aspect has been tweaked to perfection - the graphics and animation are superlative, the control is impeccable, and NuFX has struck a magnificent balance between offense and defense. Unlike many games of this type, playing tough defense is as crucial to victory as proficient scoring. Careful attention has also been paid to accurately portraying each player's various abilities

(albeit a bit exaggerated). In other words, Shaq won't be nailing long-range jumpers and Tim Hardaway isn't going to block too many shots. NBA fans such as myself will appreciate this touch of authenticity.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention Street's ingenious trick system. Performing tricks, special moves, and combos fills what's called a "Gamebreaker" meter. When this meter is full, you can take a special shot that not only adds to your score, but also subtracts from your opponent's point total. This can swing momentum in a hurry, so you're forced to do as many tricks as possible while still making good shot selections and playing strong defense. There's much more depth to NBA Street than is apparent on the surface.

- **steve thomason** ★★★★★

mat hoffman's pro bmx

publisher activision • **developer** shaba games / runecraft • **available now**
system playstation • **review**

I suppose it goes without saying that Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX has done for biking games what Tony Hawk did for skateboarding games - after all, they're almost the same game - but I guess I'll say it anyway. Like THPS, Mat Hoffman is a superb example of game design, with wide-open levels filled with ramps, jumps and grinding surfaces, not to mention secret areas to find. You'll unquestionably spend hours trying to find how to master each level, to make the perfect run of jumps and stunts and death-defying tricks, and of course complete all the level objectives like spelling T-R-I-C-K and racking up extraordinary scores. Street, dirt and vert courses are all well-

represented, so you can usually play whatever style suits you best, and there are plenty of real-world riders with their own stats and tricks, plus upgradable equipment to get the most from your wheels. Visually, I couldn't ask for more from the PS1, and completing each of the objectives is wholly satisfying, if not occasionally frustrating. However, I couldn't help but feel that there was some sort of random-crash factor since I'd fly off my bike once in a while for seemingly no reason. If you're into extreme sports and don't mind that this game is little more than Tony Hawk on two wheels, then check this one out.

- **matt hoffman's brother chris** ★★★★★



world republic

japan's top 20 games
(as of 7/05/01)



1. Tactics Ogre Gaiden
2. Sonic Adventure 2
3. Gran Turismo 3 A-spec
4. Ka (Mosquito)
5. Alchemy III: Atelier Lilli
6. Testuya The Legend of Match Master
7. EverGrace II
8. From TV Animation: One Piece
9. Jikkyou Powerful Pro Baseball 2001
10. Welcome to Pia Carrot! 2.5

Game Boy Advance
Dreamcast
PlayStation 2
PlayStation 2
PlayStation 2
PlayStation 2
PlayStation 2
PlayStation
PlayStation
Dreamcast

11. Jikkyou J. League Winning Eleven 2001
12. TV Animation: One Piece Ground Battle
13. Pocket Monster Crystal
14. Super Mario Advance
15. Pocket Monster Stadium Gold & Silver
16. Tear Ring Saga
17. World Soccer Winning Eleven 5
18. Hamster Tarou 2
19. Zoid: God of Battle Beast Raiger Zero
20. Phantasy Star Online Ver.2

PlayStation
PlayStation
Game Boy
Game Boy Advance
Game Boy
PlayStation
PlayStation 2
Game Boy
Game Boy
Dreamcast

castlevania chronicle

publisher konami • **developer** kcet • **available** now
system playstation

This is classic Castlevania in its purest form. Charging through Count Dracula's haunted castle, whipping candles for power-ups, destroying waves of zombies, bats and medusa heads as you make your way to the boss - that's what Castlevania Chronicle is all about. This "lost" Castlevania game originally appeared on the relatively obscure Japanese X68000 computer back in 1993, so you won't find any of the exceptional graphics or sound associated with the most recent titles in the series, but you will find the challenging, thumb-busting gameplay that made the series so fantastic back in the days of the NES. Other than the ability to whip downward while jumping, the mechanics are kept to a minimum: jumping, whipping, and using the occasional special weapon. Forget finding more resilient armor - you'll just need to master the timing and patterns to make your way through the eight superbly designed levels.

Visually, Castlevania Chronicle falls just short of the Genesis' Castlevania: Bloodlines. The game boasts multiple layers of parallax and a 16-bit-quality color palette, but there aren't any snazzy special effects, and the animation is pretty lacking. However, an Arrange Mode offers few minor graphical tweaks

(including a redrawn map and a fruity-colored character) as well as enhanced music and sound effects.

Though it certainly isn't the best in the series, Castlevania Chronicle has a classic appeal that can't be denied. Hardcore fans (and hardcore fans only) will definitely want to add this one to their collection and relive the legend. - chris hoffman ★★★★★



capcom vs. snk pro

publisher **capcom** • developer **capcom** • available **now**
system **dreamcast**

We all know that Capcom is the master of the rehash, but Capcom vs. SNK Pro really takes their franchise-milking ways to new depths. The good news is that the Pro edition contains all the fantastic gameplay, great characters and stellar graphics of the original. The bad news is that it contains essentially nothing more than that exact same gameplay, characters and graphics. OK, so Joe and Dan are now playable level-one characters, but they're nothing special. To

add insult to injury, all the hidden goodies from the original version are already unlocked -- EX characters, alternate colors, extra modes, bonus backgrounds, etc. -- thereby rendering all your hard work from the original useless. And there aren't any new unlockable goodies either. Of course, if you don't have the original then this is definitely worth the dough, but everyone else should wait for Capcom vs. SNK 2.

- chris hoffman ★★☆☆



maken shao

publisher **atlus** • developer **atlus** • available **now**
system **playstation 2**

The original Maken X was quite an appealing first-person experiment on Dreamcast. The game's slick look, great character design, and combination of jumping and slashing gameplay made it a very unique and enjoyable experience.

So it was that I was quite excited about this new PS2 interpretation, Maken Shao. For starters, the game had been reimagined as a third-person game, which is in general more to my liking. And on PS2, the game should look fantastic, even better than the original.

Well, I was disappointed on both counts. The third-person view adds nothing to the experience. If anything, it makes it worse, thanks to quite poor character modeling and control that feels ludicrous when you can actually see your character out there rotating around. And the graphics actually look a little worse as well. There hasn't been an upgrade in texture quality, and the way the PS2 renders the



game makes everything look soft. The crispness of the original's look has been lost.

Quite a disappointing effort this. It should and could be better than the Dreamcast game, but it is not.



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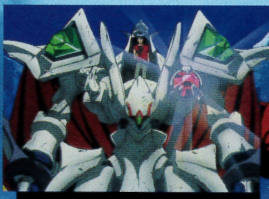
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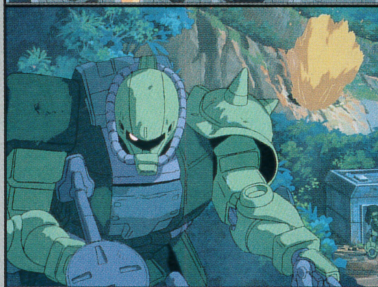
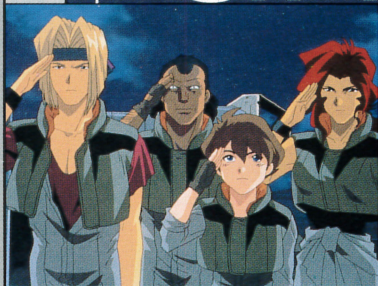
sam goody

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anime republic

GUNDAM: THE 08TH MS TEAM

studio: bandai entertainment
reviewed by: dave halverson



Shiro Amada is confident—even cocky. Imagine Maverick and the Ice Man rolled into one not-so-experienced hotshot. As the next Commander of the misfits of the Mobile Suit Gundam 08th MS Team—a division of ground troops defending the Earth against the crafty Zion army—he'll need all the attitude (and luck) he can muster. On board an Earthbound transport vessel in route to his new tour of duty, Shiro and company witness a Zion ambush in Federal airspace where the sole survivor of the lopsided battle is rendered a sitting duck. In an act as brave as it is insane, Shiro launches the transport's tiny Ball (a small pod with a single turret) and faces off against the massive Zion Mobile Suit.

Shiro's skill and determination save the day (and the pilot), but the duel leaves the two combatants floating in space. Emerging simultaneously from their cockpits, Shiro and the Zion pilot come face to face just before an explosion sends their bodies hurling through space into the carcass of a wrecked space cruiser—a vast tomb adrift among the stars. The Zion pilot (a beautiful, high-ranking female, as luck would have it) instinctively draws her weapon and tries to make Shiro a permanent resident. But when ammo runs out, she comes up wounded and Shiro has her cold—but he doesn't shoot. Instead, he patches her up and convinces her that working together is their only chance for survival. Soon, the two form a bond that becomes one of many threads in this intriguing, wartime tale—which plays out more like a big-budget Hollywood war epic than it does conventional anime.

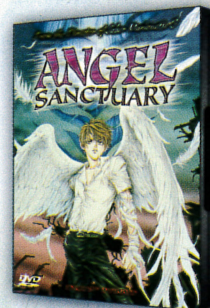
The team roster, for instance, reads like a Hollywood casting call. You've got your down-and-out veteran looking to turn his luck around, a tough-as-nails female (anyone remember Vasquez?), a young, impressionable and somewhat chicken-shit communications officer—and what unit would be complete without a rock-and-roll tech-head manning the keyboards? Thankfully this is anime, so everything is crafted far better than the Hollywood tripe we're accustomed to. Once Shiro reaches his unit on Earth, things only get better. There's barely enough time for "hellos" before the 08 is dumped into battle; and Gundams fighting in the jungle tops outer space romps in a big way. In terms of the overall production, 08th MS Team ranks up there with the best Gundam adventures, like 0079. The animation quality and attention to detail—especially in everything mechanical—is excellent, and the music and sound effects are extraordinary. You'll also find many of the character designs a refreshing break from the norm.

Since Gundam Wing has the kids in a trance, 08 MS Team seems primed for a post-teen audience, bursting with mild cursing ("piss," "shit" and the like) and some tasteful nudity. There's a real human quality at work here, too, and not so much setup that you have to replay the opener five times before you fully grasp the chronology.

08th MS Team is a no-brainer for fans and an excellent choice for Gundam newbies overwhelmed by the massive amount of Gundam on store shelves. It's self-contained and easy to follow, even if you don't know the difference between a Gundam and an Eva.

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ANGEL LINKS VOL. 2

studio: bandai entertainment

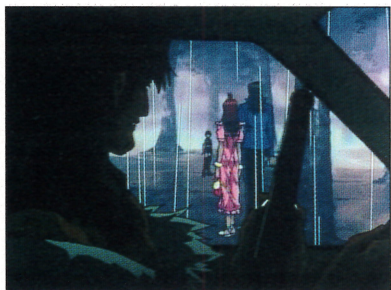
reviewed by: dave halverson

For the uninitiated, Angel Links is Bandai's derivative series lifted from the Outlaw Star universe following the adventures of one Meifon Li, a beautiful teenage girl who has inherited a rather large company (Angel Links) that escorts clients through pirate-infested regions of space, free of charge.

As volume two gets underway, the Angel Links is being peppered by sprinkler beams from a pirate vessel hovering above, supposedly because Meifon's assistant, Kousei, showed a little kindness to a cute, albeit scruffy, female pirate girl by handing her a hanky after she pricked her finger

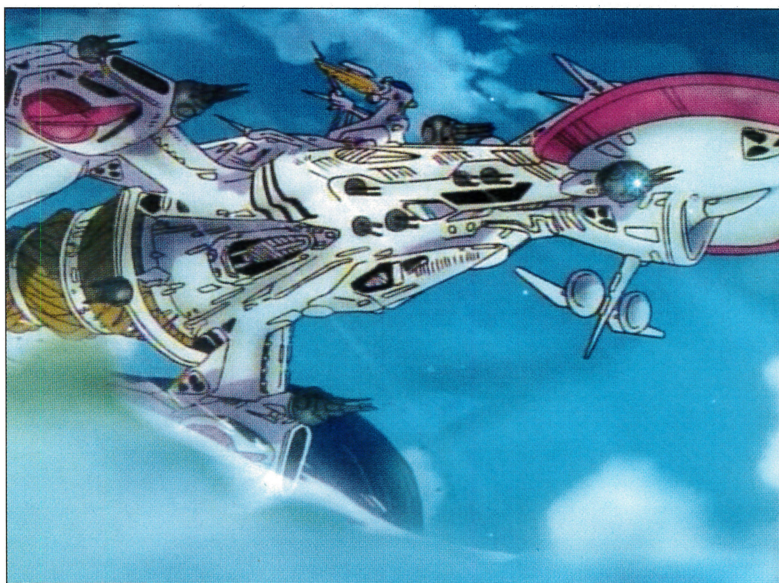
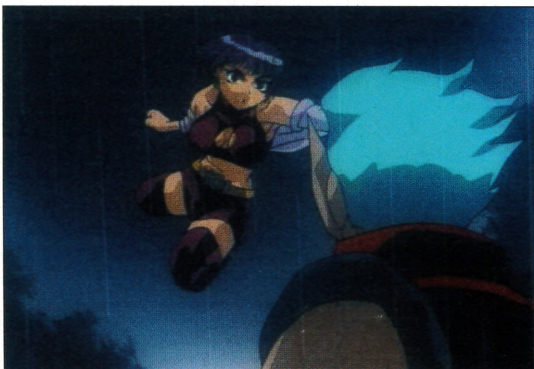


why a teenage girl's grandfather bequeathed her a pirate extermination/escort service. From the reading of the will (can you say disgruntled suits?) to the introduction of her mates, Valeria and Duuz, it serves as a catalyst for the sixth, and by far, most significant episode in the series thus far, "The Angel and the Fallen Angel." This is where Meifon's past and true identity come screaming to the surface, transforming Angel Links from cutesy to brutally serious in one fell swoop. If you've been wondering whether AL is worth committing to, this is where you get your answer. The plot twist du jour has Meifon being either killed or mortally injured by a pirate as a child in front of her grandfather, who was, in fact, a pirate himself (!), leading to the realization that she's likely not human at all. Did she ascend to heaven and return an avenging angel? Or did grandpa mess with mother nature in a big way? While the animation is a mixed bag and the plots are often as thin as Ally Mcbeal, Angel Links is developing in much the way Outlaw Star did, becoming yet another must-see series from one of two companies that seem to have a corner on the market.



entering a bar. It appears that gunfire is her way of getting his attention now that she believes she's found true love in a handkerchief. The episode quickly spirals into a morality play of love and betrayal—but Meifon does take a shower, so it's not a total loss—and culminates in an ending that I beg you to enjoy in Japanese. At the very least, we learn two things from "Rain Upon the Stars": never, ever put a cute, albeit scruffy, pirate girl into a pink dress (unless it's wet); and second, if you haven't already, it's mandatory that you turn the English dialogue "off" and the subtitles "on." Normally, I like a good dub as much as the next guy (even a little more), but the voices and delivery in Angel Links miss by such a wide margin that they greatly endanger the story.

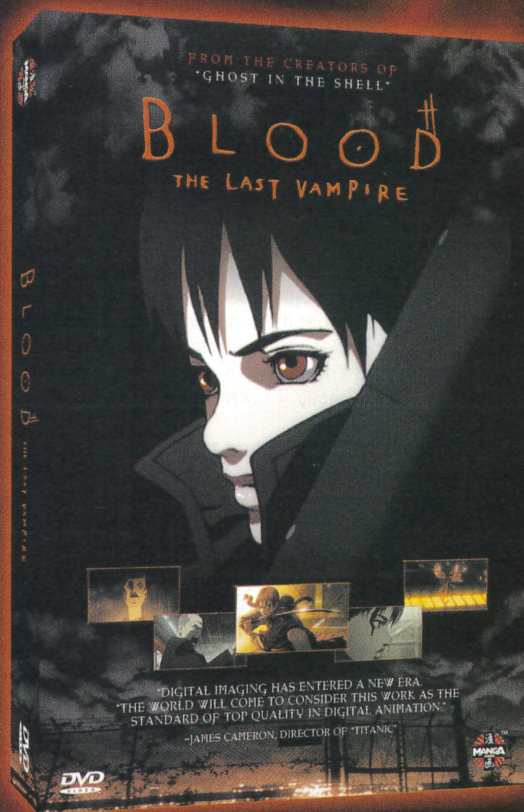
Episode five, "Crossroads," finally begins to explore, for the first time, how and



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ORPHEN VOL. 2

studio: adv films

reviewed by: dave halverson

ADV can smell video-game-related anime a mile away. Knowing full well the correlation between gamers and anime fans, they've amassed an impressive lineup of the strain. Sonic the Hedgehog, Arc the Lad, Tekken, SiN, Sakura Wars, and Panzer Dragoon are, I'm sure, just the beginning. I'm a video game junkie to the core, so Orphen has an obvious advantage where I'm concerned (since there's already a decent PS2 game on store shelves), but I'll do my best to remain objective. The game, which could have been great if the action lived up to the boss fighting, set my expectations high for the anime, and I'm happy to say that, while Orphen hasn't exactly blown me away just yet, I am not disappointed.

Orphen is a sorcerer, and an omnipotent one at that. He's also lazy and vain, but when push comes to shove, he can summon with the best of 'em. He has recently vacated the prestigious Tower of Fang (the top university for such beings), and has been keeping watch over a sacred sword capable of sealing the Bloody August—a dragon that rips through the fabric of time and, well, does all of the bad things dragons do. It's what's on the inside that counts, however, and therein lies the mystery. The Bloody August is not what it seems.

The one thing Orphen cannot conjure seems to be money, and livin' isn't free, so he's taken on a pupil to keep a roof over his head—and those root-beer floats flowing. The son of a bar owner, Majic is a frail, pensive but witty protégé whose best trait seems to be equalizing tense situations, rather than magic. But since Orphen's pissed off just about everyone he's met, tense situations are in no short supply. The Tower of Fang is worse than Fight Club when it comes to membership, and disguising his sword-spying escapade as bird-watching is short-lived when 90 pounds of trouble—the incorrigible Cleao—

returns home from boarding school and decides the guy in the tree outside is no Romeo—just a full-on perv. Add to the mix two disgruntled trolls (Volcan and Dortin) that Orphen ripped off in a card game and then set up as slaves at the castle to pay off their debt (and watch the sword), and you've got mass hysteria.

For a newer title, Orphen looks surprisingly old-school, but in all the best ways. Thick outlines define the characters and subtle filters are utilized to great effect. Plus, the animation is great for a TV series.

With a little comedy, a lotta magic and just the right balance of sexual tension, Orphen isn't just a game to play. Thanks to ADV, it's a series to watch.





Digs Commander Ikari. Hates the color red. Kicks major Angel butt.



ANIMATION.COM OR 888-MY-ANIME



TRIGUN VOL. 8

studio: pioneer entertainment

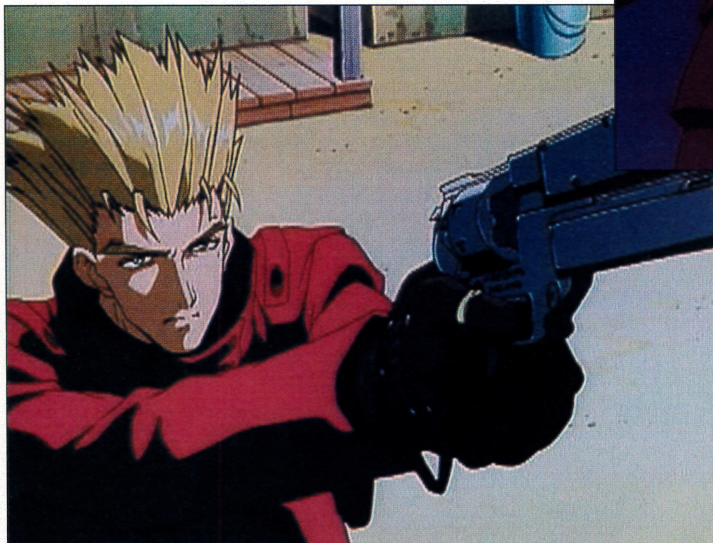
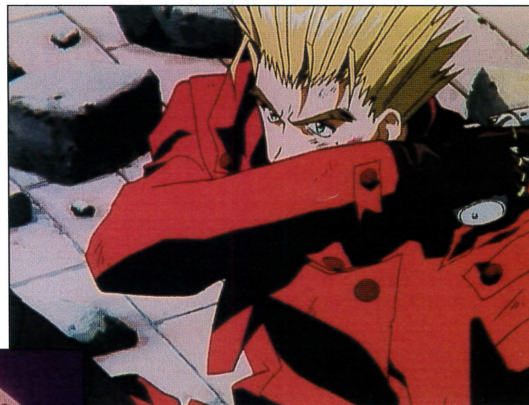
reviewed by: christina alexander

Donuts taste better when the world is at peace. Unfortunately for Vash, peace is not something that he will enjoy in the near future. He is closer than ever to finding his brother; and the more he fights for peace, the more death and destruction seem to surround him. Fighting to keep the teachings of Rem Saverem in practice, Vash constantly doubts—but never wavers—in his devotion to using his abilities to help the human race survive on such a hostile planet. Finally forced to choose—to kill or to watch his friends die—Vash is ready to meet his brother.

Wolfwood is having his own problems and his own doubts, too. Now ordered to kill the man who has become his good friend, Nicholas takes on the hardest fight of his life. His recent actions have taken a huge toll on his soul—and the guilt has started to swallow him whole.

Taking a look back at the beginning of the Trigon series, no one could have convinced me that this kind of depth could have been achieved from a goofball in a red trench coat. While many of the character

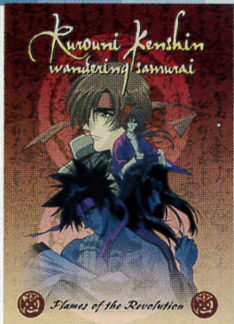
designs and individual, episodic plots bordered on ridiculous, this last Trigon DVD does a wonderful job of revealing why Vash does what he does. Vash's fierce grasp on a cheerful exterior stems from his desperate belief that Rem was right and there is so much more to the human race than his brother allows himself to see. By walking amongst humans, observing their actions and interacting with the society they have built, Vash is able to understand far more than Knives ever will. Hopefully this will give Vash the edge he will need when he finally comes face to face with his sibling.



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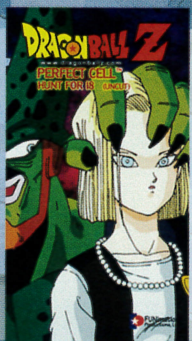


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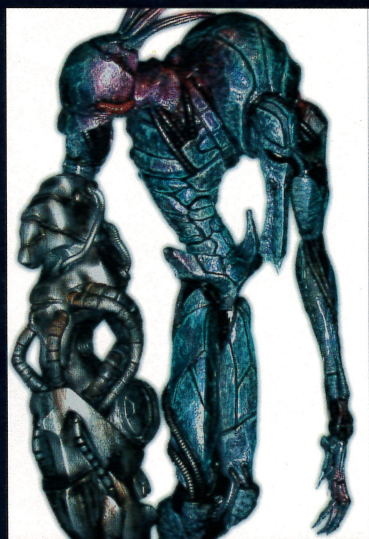
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Not surprisingly, Final Fantasy X toys are also on the way, starting with these gorgeous statues of Tidus and Yuna from ArtFX. We saw them at the recent Anime Expo in Long Beach and they promise to be just as cool as the game.



Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within had two lines of figures on display, one from Bandai, the other from Palisades. Although Palisades didn't have any of the 12" human figures at E3, you can see one of them here, as well as the Phantom figure, a proposed 12" figure for the line. The human figure, a member of an elite military group called Deep Eyes, is one of the heroes of the film. His name is Ryan Whittaker. You'll want him for your collection.

At the New York Toy Fair back in February, McFarlane announced their Metal Gear Solid 2 toy line, including three "secret operatives." Well, it's secret no more, as the first operative has been revealed as Fortune, the lethal rail-gun wielding chick from the E3 2001 MGS2 trailer. She'll hit this fall, coinciding with the game's release.



Dragon Figures, a company I've mentioned before in these pages, stated they would be producing a line of 12" figures based on the Resident Evil games. Well guess what? These figures will not be imported for US distribution. So sad! But wait, folks. Keep your eyes glued to these pages in the months ahead. I endeavor to find a way we RE fans can get these figures for our collection.

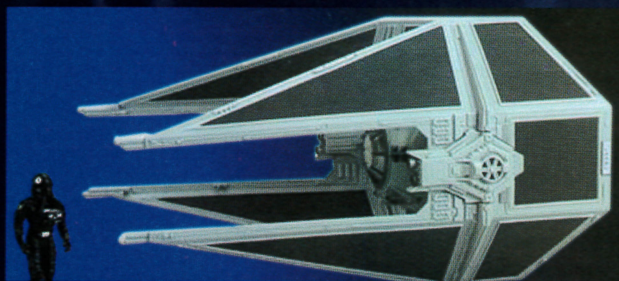
- Ryan Brookhart

synth

Kaiyodo surprised a lot of collectors in Japan this summer when they released, without much fanfare, a highly detailed, super-articulated Panzer cop figure from the Jin-Roh anime. Sporting two heads, loads of weaponry, and two sets of hands, this figure sold out very fast.



The Tie Interceptor, long sought after by Star Wars vehicle fanatics like myself, has just become a little easier to obtain. Late this summer the Interceptor will be released as a Toys R Us exclusive. It will feature a new paint scheme, newly sculpted wing panels (gone are the decals!), and a special Tie pilot that bends at the knees. Just like me.



And that brings us to the crown jewel of this month's synthetix. Yes, Art Asylum's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon figures. In my humble view these are hands down the finest movie-related figures ever made. In an effort to fully enjoy this line, I'm going to let the pictures do most of the talking. But I would like to point out the wonderful display/playset environments and the discrete but generous articulation. Art Asylum has long been the finest design house in the world of action figures and this line represents them at the height of their game. I just wish I had the space to list everyone over at the Asylum by name, but they know who they are! Congratulations! Look for this amazing line everywhere this October. When you see them, buy a set. Buy two sets.



Here's a sneak peak at a few of the Lord of the Rings figures coming from Toy Biz late this summer. Keep your fingers crossed on this line; Toy Biz has a spotty record in the quality department and these figures stand a 50/50 chance of being great in final production.



netix

grgear

Thrustmaster XL Screenmate

While Sony continues to delay their own PS One screen (one wonders if it will ever come out), third parties are free to fill the void with varying degrees of success. This example from Thrustmaster can be placed in the successful column. The XL Screenmate (\$149) features a good quality 5" TFT display, which works with both PAL and NTSC systems, and it comes bundled with a very handy 12V car cigarette lighter power adapter, for some mobile play.



Sony SCD-333ES 5 disc Super Audio CD Changer

The sputtering DVD-Audio format is still trying to gain a foothold, but while it flounders, Sony and Philips Super Audio CD standard is quickly gaining a following, especially among two-channel audiophiles. And the price of the players continues to spiral downward, the latest example being Sony's SCD-333ES, a five disc changer retailing for \$800. This may seem a bit steep for an audio-only machine, but the enhanced resolution of the Super Audio format is astounding.



FINAL FANTASY

THE SPIRITS WITHIN

PHANTOM

Deluxe Action Figure



Sculpted by: S.O.T.A. Sculpture & Design
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This Phantom deluxe figure features multiple points of articulation and stands a whopping 18-inches tall. It is a companion piece to the highly anticipated 12-inch line from Palisades and is in perfect scale with the 12-inch figures. This is a must have piece not only for fans of Final Fantasy but any fan of highly detailed, museum quality figures.

18 inches



SQUARE PICTURES

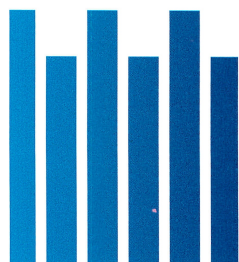
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Stabbing Westward have been floating around in some way or another since '86, although their early '90s recording Ungod was their first major breakthrough. Breaking free from their metal roots, the band's self-titled 4th disc is one of those rare musical oddities, a CD where every song isn't just good, but positively inspired. Stabbing Westward have found their musical center—a mixture of uplifting harmonies, light metal and pillowy acoustics that coupled with Christopher Halls dusty vocals seem to permeate your whole body. Each song seems to wash over you leaving an air of melancholy, elation, longing, or reflection. They all conjure some type of emotion—a rarity in modern rock. Only VAST has made as lasting an impression on me in the year past. The out of body "So far away" almost levitates you with its soaring vocals, while the reckless abandon of "Wasted" emits enough kinetic energy to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Buy this CD.

radiohead amnesiac



"I'm a reasonable man/Get off my case" sings Thom Yorke on Amnesiac, the fractured, hopelessly obscure, beautifully vague eight-month follow-up to Radiohead's equally out-there Kid A. Is this a direct kiss-off to critics and fans left cold by Radiohead's recent moody digression into electronic murk? Fully deciphering the songs on Amnesiac is as futile as finding order in the universe. And that's just the point: Radiohead don't want you tread on the transparent surfaces of their songs; they mean to perplex you, pummel you with sonic glitches and crackles, radiate you with bursts of bold musical expression, until you finally succumb to the emotional truth of the songs. The album resonates, but its feeling of isolation isn't easily digestible. What little Yorke has to say spills out in random bits and pieces, a disjointed stream-of-consciousness locked inside a shell of keyboard-driven texture. Riding on the ethereal flow of "Pyramid Song," the album's solemn highlight, Yorke sings, "Jump in the river what did I see/Black eyed angel swam with me." Close your eyes and lock down the headphones.

stp shangri-la dee da



Right about now is when you might expect Stone Temple Pilots to experiment — to rearrange their rock influence and join the radio-friendly banalities in a contrived attempt to heal old wounds and reignite a fan base. But then they hit you with their most mature, complex, flat-out rockin' album yet. The opening track, Dumb Love, screams Stone Temple Pilots with guttural guitars and Scott Weiland's forceful growl boiling the music. The album has no shortage of propulsive rock, but it really begins to shine when a cleaned-up Weiland, his voice blessed with a new clarity, is backed by his inspired band's down-tempo contemplative moments. On the lush, airy A Song For Sleeping, STP show that they have grown immensely from their bumpy five-album journey, and a touch of sunshine has even prevailed: "There's so much God can teach you if you only have the time." It's a lovely song from a band that isn't known for uplift. But don't worry: this album has no shortage of kick-ass rock.

gorillaz gorillaz



If the goal of most side projects is total self-aggrandization, then Blur frontman Damon Albarn's brainchild, Gorillaz, must be a refreshing change if not a casually listenable mix — an inspiration for band to focus on nothing less than pumping out the music they may never thought they could make. If it's not about the music, what were Gorillaz thinking, hiding behind a cartoon persona and playing live behind a light-drenched video screen? The result won't blow your mind, but it will get your body moving to the cool, hip-hop driven melodies winding through acoustical flourishes and deep electronic underpinnings. It's an eclectic mix, moving from trippy stretches locked into languid basslines to more airy, open pop-rock. Albarn must have penned his lyrics on the bus to the studio — gravity, never let me down — but let's not sweat the details: Gorillaz is a smooth concoction that goes down easy.

the world of cinema and dvd

cinematrix



Monkey Bone

20th Century FOX
Rated: PG-13

As striking and surreal as it was in the theatre, *Monkey Bone* is even more so on DVD where you can see every amazing detail of this beautiful hand-made film. Robbed at the box office for reasons as strange as the film itself, *Monkey Bone* chronicles the coma of Stu Miley, warping us into his ultra-weird private psychosis. Stu falls victim to a freak accident the night his cartoon, *Monkeybone* (which makes *South Park* look like *Sesame Street*), premieres for the Comedy Channel while he's preparing to pop the question to the woman who turned his life around, Julie, played by the sultry Bridget Fonda. The only way these two lovebirds will ever live happily ever after is if Stu escapes his hellish purgatory, which he's only got 90 days to do, since his sister, played by the frisky Megan Mullally (*Will & Grace*) plans on pulling the plug if he

doesn't snap, too. All hell (and Chris Kattan, who kills as a living corpse) breaks loose when *Monkey Bone* slides into Stu's body by pilfering his ticket back to the land of the living, leaving Stu in an interminable nightmare—a helpless spectator to his own life, only he's not living it.

If this is what slipping into a coma is actually like, then find me a hammer, because between Rose McGowan as a hot pussy and some of the most creative and devilishly dark visuals ever assembled, this entire film had me purring. The DVD contains extended scenes, a comprehensive making of, optional dialogue, directors commentary, animation studies, trailers, the works. Ah hell, just go buy it already.

- dave halverson (Rating: B)



Stanley Kubrick Collection

Warner Bros.
Rated: G - R

As immature a discipline as film is, there emerged a master of the form in the late twentieth century. Of course, this man was Stanley Kubrick, and in the second box set to honor the famed director, we get an extended look into his truly astounding body of work.

Films included in the set are *Lolita*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Eyes Wide Shut* (the edited version). Unfortunately, *Paths of Glory*, available from MGM, is not included. But even so, this is a great set, if only because it also includes *Stanley Kubrick: A Life in Pictures*, a documentary about the filmmaker. Featuring interviews with Steven

Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Woody Allen, Jack Nicholson, Malcom McDowell, the director's wife, Christiane, and many others, it offers a rather unique look at the man behind the films. It's lacking only in that Kubrick spent so little time talking about himself and his films, and there is so little footage of him actually working, that nearly all information about him comes second hand. Still, there are some fantastic insights and anecdotes to be found within the documentary, and any self-respecting film lover cannot be without this set.

- mike hobbs (Rating: A)



	monkey bone	unbreakable	o brother, where art thou?	cast away	crouching tiger, hidden dragon
dave halverson	B	B+	A-	C+	A
brady flechter	C+	B+	A-	A-	B
mike hobbs	—	B	B	A-	A-
steve thomason	—	A	B+	A-	A-
jon gibson	B-	A	C+	A-	B+

cutting room floor...

Whatever your opinion of *Star Wars* Episode 1: *The Phantom Menace*, you've probably been waiting for the announcement of the DVD. Love or hate Jar Jar, he is a rather amazing CG character, and the Pod race remains one of the best ILM sequences of all time. So for purely aesthetic reasons, it's not without some excitement that after months of denial, Lucas has finally announced a date for the DVD of Episode 1: October 12, 2001. To be included on the disc are special commentary tracks with Lucas, editor/sound designer Ben Burtt, effects supervisor Dennis Muren, and others, along with seven never-before-seen sequences including new special effects completed just for the DVD. Also included are five behind-the-scenes featurettes,

never-before-seen production photos, galleries, and the *Duel of the Fates* music video. Now, where's *The Empire Strikes Back*?



grkives

games in retrospect



axelay

publisher konami **developer** konami
system super nintendo

Axelay is the epitome of a great shooter. From its exquisite graphics to its white-knuckle action to its innovative style, Konami broke all traditional shooter rules and created a game without peer in the 16-bit era.

Nearly every facet of Axelay reflected the genius of the programmers. Instead of collecting icons to power up the ship or offer protection, you were able to choose which weapons to assign to your ship's three ports before each stage. The weapons also worked as shields, as each hit you took would disable one of the attacks instead of destroying your ship immediately. After clearing each level there would be new, awesome weapons to select (like a multiple-way shot, a Vulcan cannon, and spread bombs).

Matching the innovative weapon system was a unique aspect of contrasting

play styles. Levels alternated between side-view and top-down stages where the edge of the playfield and enemies were warped as they came into view, providing a 3D, behind-the-ship effect. Even better were the astounding, enormous bosses. What in the history of gaming can compare to the screen-filling UFO boss at the end of level 3 or the magnificent lava monster in stage 5?

Along with waves of vicious enemies and a fantastic soundtrack (witness the soothing sounds of the sea in level 4), Axelay was a shooting experience like no other. Intriguingly, when you beat the game three times consecutively, players were rewarded with a message promoting Axelay 2—but the game never surfaced. Maybe with the advent of Game Boy Advance, we'll finally get the long-promised sequel.

- chris hoffman



snes

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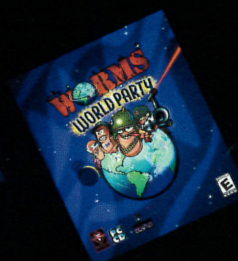
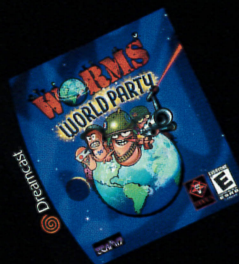
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TEAM 17



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NEW-LOOK REPUBLIC

Dear GR,

I've been a fan of the Republic for some time, and was slightly upset when it apparently vanished for several months. I feared that its disappearance would prove permanent, or, worse yet, that the magazine would return under different direction as a disgrace to its previous glory.

Fortunately, Gamers Republic looks to be in solid shape. While there are a few copy errors in the July issue, everything else seems to be characteristic of my favorite gaming mag. My only major gripe would lie with the undernourished two-page World Republic section. I can only hope that import material was sparse for this particular issue, and that future editions will devote more pages to the Japanese and European gaming scenes. I'd also like to see little-known imports like Fhey Area and Emerald Dragon covered in future installments of the GRkives section, if it's possible.

At any rate, I'm glad to have GR back, and I hope that I'll be reading it throughout the impending system war and many console conflicts to come.

-Todd Ciolek

Dear GR,

I just wanted to drop you a line and tell you that the new GR issue rocks. I'm happy that you guys are back. Thanks for the issue!

-Jesse Jensen

You're welcome, guys. We're glad you - and everybody else who sent in their compliments - like the redesign, and we hope you guys agree that the modifications we made this issue have turned GR into what is unquestionably the most sophisticated video game publication on the market. Drop us a line and let us know what you think. As for World Republic, we know it's been smaller than usual, but there's just been so much content to put into the last few issues we've had trouble squeezing in everything we want. Don't worry though. We'll beef it up again just as soon as we have some space!

WHERE THE HECK YOU BEEN?

Hello,

I have been with you since the beginning. I love the mag and always look forward to what you have to say. I manage a newsstand, and for at least 3

months, I have not seen any GR. I am sick! I cannot read the other mags, bunch of idiots they are, young padawan. I have looked several places...no luck. I called the distributor and they said it was still on my draw. Help me please. What is going on?

I miss DHGC. I used to call and talk with them. They knew what games I liked. We were brothers and sisters. Today, the internet rules, and no one on the phone speaks english anymore.

GBA is so cool. Treasure on GBA!!!! I look forward to GameCube. Nintendo's magic still works on me. Wishing you easy times and great games.

East bound and down,

-Joe Saab

Hi,

Am I the only one that noticed that there was no new GR for April????? What's going on?

-Anonymous

DHGC? That's going way back, baby! As you can tell by the issue you're holding in your hands, we are back and we're not going away any time soon. It's true, we were gone a few months, which would explain your problems finding said issues, but we weren't just sitting around doing nothing. We spent our down time evolving the magazine to come up with the all-new look and new size you now bear witness to. On top of that, we've got ourselves an all-new publisher and even a new office here in sunny...er, overcast...southern California. To make a long story short, we've gone through a lot of changes since the last issue hit newsstands, but at heart we're still the same old GR.

I PITY THE POOR FOO

Hello,

I have a question about a game. Where the heck can I get a copy of that game that sounds so awesome: Mr. T Gets A Job. Please tell me if and where I can get a copy of this game. Thank you.

-Jim Metzger

The elusive "Mr.T Gets A Job" RPG that was featured in our February issue still hasn't made its way into stores, and the publisher, Royal Canadian Mountie Inc., says it will probably wait until the enhanced version, Mr.T Gets A Job Complete, is ready. There's also a chance Mr.T will sue RCMI's pants off.

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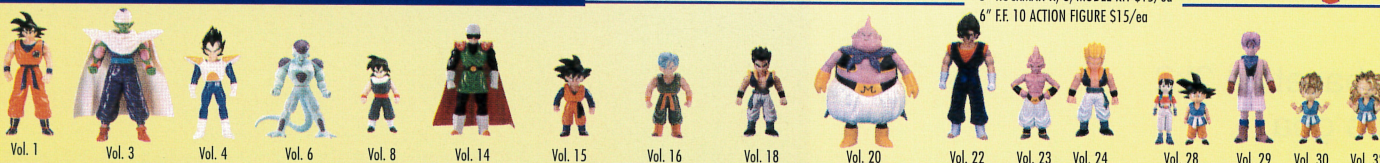
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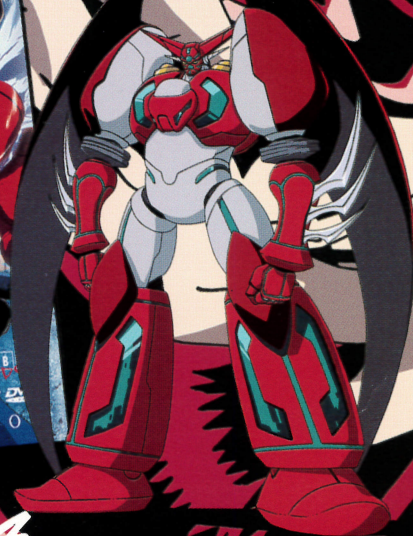
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